

CHAMP  
THORNTON

**RADICALLY  
DIFFERENT**

TEACHER GUIDE

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO COMMUNITY

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# A Word For Teachers and Parents

For years my wife and I have said that we want our three children to grow up and leave our home “in sync with reality.” What we mean is that we want them to be in touch with the realities that exist in God’s universe.

For starters, there is a loving and holy God; he’s made a very good world, yet it’s also broken now because of human sin. Yet God, in his love, sent his Son to rescue us and, who, one day, will set everything right once again. We want our children to live in a way that reflects this “true story of the whole world.”<sup>1</sup>

Yet society around us and our desires within us tell a different story—starring video games, cool apps, social media, friends, sports, movies, music, and fashion. In this version of life, out of sync with reality, God is absent, sin is renamed, and the Rescuer is irrelevant.

To get an accurate picture of life in this world, we must simultaneously view all of life through three lenses. The first lens provides the view that originally God made everything very *good* (Genesis 1). The next lens reveals that this good world is now also *bad*, broken and tainted by sin (Genesis 3). The third clarifies that Jesus came to make *new* everything that was broken by sin (Romans 8). Creation, Fall, Redemption—good, bad, new.<sup>2</sup>

If you leave out any of these lenses, you will neglect some aspect of reality that God intends for us and our children to embrace. So on week one, we start with God—always the best place to start any study of Scripture. The next three weeks look at what the Bible says about each “lens.” The remainder of the study considers one new topic—featuring relationships—each week, using this three-part lens.

*Radically Different* doesn’t aim to be exhaustive or provide a topical dictionary of issues, but to help middle-school students begin to think biblically about life and relationships. Through your ministry, may the Lord lead their relationships to be radically biblical and *radically different*.



# How to Use This Teacher Guide

## The Book at a Glance

The first four weeks of *Radically Different* set the groundwork for the remainder of the book. Week 1 begins with what is most important—God himself. Weeks 2–4 introduce the three lenses through which to look at every question. They are the following:

Week 2: Creation (*good*—God made everything “very good”)

Week 3: Fall (*bad*—everything is messed up because of sin)

Week 4: Redemption (*new*—God sent Jesus to set things right)

In other words, when trying to figure something out, in relationships or anywhere else in life, ask these three questions:

- How is it good because God made it (Creation)?
- How is it messed up because of Adam and Eve’s sin (the Fall)?
- And how has Jesus’s death restored it to its original goodness—or even better (Redemption)?

CREATION	FALL	REDEMPTION
God made it . . .	We broke it . . .	Jesus fixes it. <sup>3</sup>
Good	Bad	New
God’s World Designed	God’s World Bent	God’s World Restored

These three words—good, bad, new—are like three lenses of a telescope. Look at everything in life through all three lenses.

## The Weekly Plan

When you get together with your students each week, they should have already worked their way through the week’s material in their student book.

Here’s an overview of the elements in your Teacher Guide and what your time with your students might look like each week:

**Content Overview.** This paragraph provides you with a summary of what your students are learning each week. Leaders could use this paragraph to give a quick orientation to parents or discussion leaders.

**Aims.** These objectives capture the point of each Day from that week in the Student Guide.

**Getting Started** (5–10 minutes). Use the Story Starter or Icebreaker Idea to broadly introduce the topic you'll be discussing. Also, if your group is large enough, you may want to keep the entire group together for the introduction before splitting up into smaller discussion groups for the remainder of the time.

**Memorize** (10–15 minutes). Add this element at the beginning or end of your lesson. Scripture memorization is about treasuring God's Word. Students will work to memorize Colossians 3:1–4:1, which features many aspects of Christian relationships. Encourage students to spend time at home memorizing the week's passage.

**Discussion Questions** (15–20 minutes). As you lead the group through the week's material, encourage discussion by asking some of the suggested questions at appropriate times. Some additional teaching notes are also included.

**Next Steps** (10–15 minutes). The aim of this section is to help the students have a clear action plan for living out what they've learned. You may find that students have other, even better, ideas for how to apply the text to life.



**To introduce *Radically Different* to your group, go through the following pre-lesson before Week One.**

This pre-lesson will introduce *Radically Different* to your group. Distribute the books and walk the group through the organization of the first lesson so they can see what is expected of them each week.

Take a few minutes to introduce students to the passage they'll be memorizing over the course of this study: Colossians 3:1–4:1. Students may memorize from any Bible version you prefer.

**GETTING STARTED**

**Option 1. Story Starter**

Tell a story about a time when you saw the stars and they seemed especially brilliant—perhaps on a camping trip or through a telescope. Explain why the stars were so clear and vivid and relate what kind of impact that experience had on you.

**Option 2. Icebreaker Idea**

Use a packing tube or sleeve of a rain jacket to serve as a “telescope.” Tell your group that you're going to do some stargazing, using this telescope. Ask for volunteers to look through the telescope.

Ask for three volunteers, and tell each person to identify what objects they see through the telescope. Have the first volunteer look through one end of the telescope, as you pass a Mars candy bar past the other end. For the second volunteer, you can use a Milky Way candy bar. For the third volunteer, you announce that it's the Big Dipper as you pass a Styrofoam cup (with some water in it and with “the Big Dipper” written on the side) past the other end, and pour the contents down the telescope.

Often, a telescope will have more than one lens for magnification. Like a telescope, God's Word also provides more than one lens for looking at life. God has given us his Word to help us not only learn about him, but also learn about life—and that includes relationships.

**INTRODUCE RADICALLY DIFFERENT**

Distribute copies of the *Radically Different* student guide. Have the group open their books and show them the Contents page. Read through the introductory material together.

Explain that the first four weeks will be an introduction to the entire study, giving attention to the following topics, one per week: God, Good (creation), Bad (fall), and New (redemption).

The remaining weeks will cover one topic per week within the overarching category of community or relationships, whether with God or with other people. During a typical week, students will look at the topics through three lenses. Day one will use the “good” lens, day two the “bad” lens, and day three the “new” lens.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Have leaders share how they have grown and changed in the area of their time with the Lord (prayer, Bible reading, etc.). Ask students what practices they have found most helpful in this aspect of their lives. Encourage all students to make plan for their time in the Word and prayer this week.

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

Students will learn that Jesus is always revealing what God the Father is like. For example, Christ reveals that God is love, and this love is an essential aspect of God in his tri-unity (“the Trinity”). The Father, Son, and Spirit have always loved the other members of the Godhead. It is in God’s very nature to show love to others, and it’s his own love that he pours out on his people.

#### Aims

- To encourage students in the love of God that he loves to show
- To clarify that Jesus exactly reflects the Father
- To introduce the doctrine of the Trinity

#### Memorize

Colossians 3:1–2

### GETTING STARTED

#### Option 1. Story Starter

Tell a story about how people have said you are like one of your parents.

#### Option 2. Icebreaker Idea

Ask one of your students to draw a caricature of you, the teacher.

Ask the group what part of the drawing looks most like you. (Discuss.)

When you draw caricatures, the key is to take a few unique characteristics and exaggerate them.

Read John 1:14. When the Bible says that Jesus fully reveals what the Father is like—in contrast to caricatures—what aspects or characteristics of the Father do you think he is displaying? (Discuss.) You can also look up and discuss Hebrews 1:1–3.

It’s easy to think that Jesus showed us the Father when he calmed a storm or raised the dead. But the Bible teaches that Jesus is the exact image of the Father. Every word, every act of kindness, every miracle, and every instance of self-sacrifice revealed the Father. If you want to know what God is like, then look at Jesus in the Bible.

# WEEK ONE

## GOD



This book is about relationships. But where to start? There are so many different people in your life—friends and family members, people at school and at church, fun people and not-so-fun people. Where do we dive in? Let's start where it's always best to begin—with God himself.

The Bible helps you see him, like a telescope helps you look at stars. When you look at a star—massive and erupting with energy—*without* a telescope, it seems like a tiny twinkle in the night sky. In the same way, some people imagine God as a distant and kind, bearded old man. Yet if you could really see what God is like, you'd be blown away! He's ablaze with limitless power, wisdom, beauty, and love. And this is how the Bible helps us see what God is truly like.

So when you open God's Word, remember to always look for who God is and what he's like. But before you start to read the passage of Scripture for each day this week, take time to pray from your heart this prayer or one like it.

### PRAYER

"God, you have told us what you're like in your Word; please help me to really see what you've written, and most of all to see and get to know you better. In Jesus's name, Amen."

("Amen," means something like, "this is what I really mean," or "let it be so," or "I agree with what I've said." But most people usually just mean: "I'm done praying now.")

# Day 1

Read John 1:14 and 18 (below). Remember, ask the Lord to help you understand what you've read.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . .<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. John 1:14, 18

- ▶ In John 1:14, someone is given the title "the Word." Whoever this is, he's communicating a very important message from God. Who do you think this is? (Hint: In the Bible who became human and lived among other human beings?)

*Jesus Christ*

- ▶ According to these verses, where can people see God? Who has made him known? Put verse 18 in your own words.

*(When you see a lowercase letter after a verse number, that indicates a certain part of the verse. So, for example: verse "18a," refers to the first part of verse 18, usually up to the first punctuation mark, like a comma or semicolon. Verse 18b, would refer to the next section, and 18c would be the third section, etc.)*

*God the Father has made the Son known; see John 1:18.*



## THINK ABOUT IT

If you want to see what God is like, look at Jesus. You can see what God is like in the powerful ways Jesus healed people, defeated demons, and controlled the weather. But as God's Son, Jesus revealed the Father in *everything* he did. Every kind word, every humble act of service, every moment of patience—all this shows you what our God is truly like in real-life ways we can understand.



*Jesus revealed the Father in everything he did.*

# DAY 2

Read 1 John 4:8 (below). (After you read, take time to pray the prayer at the beginning of this week, and then read 1 John 4:8 again.)

**8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:8

On Day 1, you learned how Jesus showed us exactly what God the Father is like. He revealed him. The question for today is what did Jesus reveal about the Father? What does 1 John 4:8 say that God is?

*God is love.*

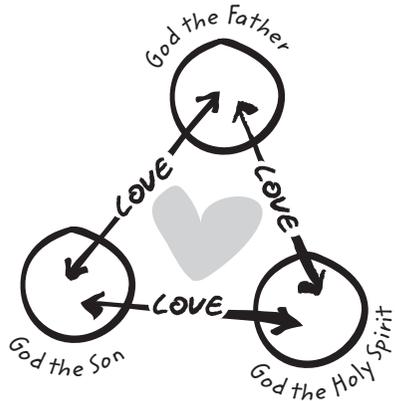
Which of the following does this verse NOT say? Cross through the wrong answers.

- God “does loving things.”
- God “became love” by sending Jesus.
- God is “usually loving.”
- God is love.

What do you think it means when John wrote, God is love?

*God in his deepest person—who he “is”—is a God of love.*

Did you realize that God, at his very heart, *loves to love*? That’s what he is actually like—at his core.



All this can be hard to think about. But here is the basic point: there has never, ever been a time when God was not full and overflowing with love. God *is* love. Take a moment and ask God to pour out his love into your heart today.

# Day 3

So far this week, we've seen that Jesus shows us exactly what God is like, and what we learn about God is that he is full of love. That's just what he's like; no one twists his arm to be loving.

- But if God is love (not that he "became" love), what did God love before he created everything? Give this some thought, then write down your ideas.

*God the Father loved the Son and Spirit, the Son loved the Father and Spirit, and the Spirit loved the Father and Son.*

Read John 17:24.

*<sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. John 17:24*

- How does this verse answer the previous question? What was God doing before he made the universe? Whom was he loving?

*The Father has always loved his Son.*



## THINK ABOUT IT

This will not fit into our little human brains, but here's the mind-blowing truth: God has always been. And what he's always been is this: a loving Father to his Son. God the Father has always loved the Son, and the Son has always loved the Father (John 14:31). Together with the Holy Spirit, the Father and Son didn't make the world and people because they needed someone to love (they had each other, right?). Instead, because they were already so full of love—and always had been—the Father, Son, and Spirit created the world to share their love with others.

## IN CLOSING

# IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE

If you've been around other Christians, you've probably heard the term "Trinity." This term is a compound word:

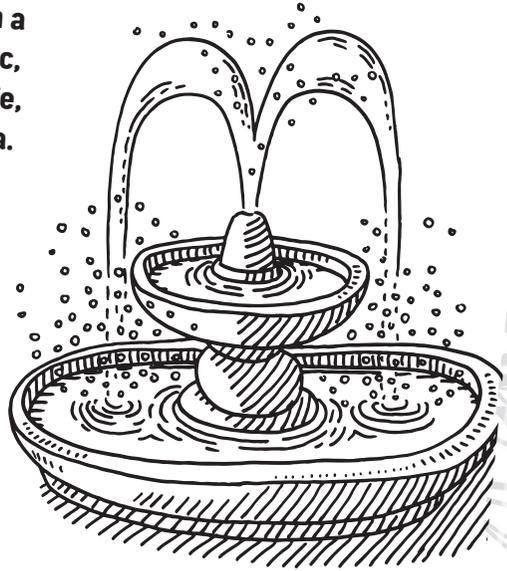
**"tri" (three) + "[u]nity."**

It refers to the fact that in the Bible there is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. This seems impossible to figure out. But the Trinity is not an addition problem in math; it's not a formula in science.

Instead, the Tri-unity of God means that at his very core, God is *relational*. The Father has always loved the Son and Spirit. The Son and Spirit have always loved the Father and each other (John 14:31; 16:14–15; 17:24). It's in God's deepest nature to love and show

love to others (Hosea 11:9). And he's always been that way. C. S. Lewis, author of the *Chronicles of Narnia* said it this way:

**“In Christianity God is not a static thing—not even a person—but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance. . . . [The] pattern of this three-Personal life is . . . a great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very centre of reality.”**<sup>4</sup>



So, for Christians, when God says he loves you, he means it from the bottom of his heart. When you ask him to show compassion or mercy, you don't have to convince him or try to make him do something he doesn't want to do. The Tri-unity of God means that he is—and always has been—full and overflowing with love.

Relationships

## **Week One: God / Discussion Questions**

1. What stood out to you from the Word this week? (How has the Lord been using his Word to work in your life this week?)
2. Who here has ever actually looked through a telescope or microscope? What did you notice that you hadn't seen before?
3. What do we learn about God when we look at Jesus? (see John 1:14)
4. How are these two statements different: "God is loving" and "God is love"?
5. Which would you want to be true about another person in your life (a parent, friend, etc.)—that \_\_\_\_\_ is loving or that \_\_\_\_\_ is love? Why?
6. Challenge Question. Imagine a different situation. What if, in a made-up world, there was a God who did not really like to love? In this situation, love would not be in his very nature. How would you feel if this kind of God said he would forgive you when you disobey? How would you feel if this kind of God said you were now his child in his family?
7. Based on what you read this week, what are some wrong answers to the question, Why did God create people?
8. If God "is love," how do you think God thinks about you when you've sinned or messed up?
9. If God "is love" at his core, then how should you feel when you've asked him to forgive you?

### **Next Steps**

Your students' love should reflect God's love. Brainstorm with them about some ways they can show real love to others. This is not about coming across as nice people, rather it's about having (and demonstrating) real love for others. Encourage your students to write down two ways they can show God's love to others this week.



### CONTENT OVERVIEW

In the beginning God created the world, and he created it all very good. God made human beings to resemble and represent him on earth. As such they were to both enjoy and take care of the good world he had made. And part of his very good world were the rules he gave for people to obey.

#### Aims

- To remind your students that we are all on planet Earth to resemble and represent our Creator
- To help students feel their responsibility to not only enjoy what God has made, but also take care of it (as cultivators, not merely consumers)
- To show that even God's rules were made good

#### Memorize

Colossians 3:3–4

### GETTING STARTED

#### Option 1. Story Starter

Tell a story about a time when you didn't adequately take care of something that belonged to you.

#### Option 2. Icebreaker Idea

This week we've been looking at the "goodness" of the world God created. And for many people that wouldn't exclude the goodness of bacon.

Show this bacon pie chart to the group (<http://cdn.foodbeast.com/content/uploads/2014/05/bacon-pie-chart.jpg>). You could, alternatively, bring in a warm plate of bacon!

What is your favorite recipe using this most essential food group?

Now, if you're not a bacon fan, let's move to a different topic. What things that God has made come to mind right away as "good"?