



# Introduction

## *About ABC*

### **Mission**

Answers Bible Curriculum was developed to present the gospel, beginning in Genesis, to all generations; to train believers to know, obey, and defend God's Word; and to encourage believers to become conformed to the image of Christ.

### **Overview**

The 2009 book *Already Gone* by Ken Ham and Britt Beemer (and the scientific study on which the book is based) reveals the reasons why young people are leaving the church. In much of the teaching today in our churches, the Bible is disconnected from the real world, and the authority of Scripture is undermined and replaced with secular reasoning using man's ideas.

The church has failed to teach the Bible as relevant fact. We have, intentionally or unintentionally, taught the Scriptures as nothing but "stories" that relate to spiritual matters and have avoided engaging the challenging questions from the secular world that bombard church children and adults the other 166 hours of their week. As a result, children are beginning to doubt the Bible—and the gospel message that it presents—as early as elementary school. Many studies confirm that more than 60 percent of young people leave the church after they graduate from high school.

Answers Bible Curriculum was designed and written to provide answers to the questions and issues that confront youth and adults in school, in the media, from friends, at work, etc. It is our hope and prayer that God will be pleased to use this curriculum to instill a lifelong trust in the Bible and in the God who authored it.

## Guiding Principles

Certain principles guided our writers, editors, and reviewers as we developed Answers Bible Curriculum. These principles are reflected in the teaching, activities, and illustrations presented throughout the curriculum.

### **We can trust all of God's Word, beginning in Genesis.**

- God's Word is true; God does not lie.
- The historical record of the Bible is confirmed often by historical, archaeological, and scientific support.

### **God's attributes are displayed throughout the Bible.**

- God's sovereignty is demonstrated in history as he fulfills his purposes through people and events.
- God's attributes (including his holiness, justice, love, and mercy) are demonstrated through his dealings with people.

### **The Bible presents true history.**

- The Bible presents real history, showing the unfolding plan of God to redeem a people for himself.
- The historical accounts of the Bible intersect with secular history.

### **We must carefully and accurately interpret the Bible.**

- The proper use of hermeneutics helps us understand the Bible accurately.
- Understanding the Bible requires time and effort.

### **God's plan of redemption is woven throughout Scripture.**

- God's plan of redemption is presented throughout the Bible, beginning in Genesis.
- Many accounts in the Old Testament connect to the New Testament and point to Jesus and the gospel message.

### **We must be ready to give a defense for what we believe.**

- Students and adults must be equipped with answers to questions skeptics ask.
- We can use science, history, archaeology, etc. to confirm the accuracy of the biblical record.

### **We are to live in light of what the Bible teaches.**

- God's Word is applicable today.
- We can learn from scriptural examples of obedience (and disobedience) to God's Word.
- Believers are called to walk in obedience to God's Word.

## Bible Version

Answers Bible Curriculum uses the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible.

## Scope & Sequence

Answers Bible Curriculum is a 200-lesson curriculum that covers the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, in chronological fashion. The first 120 lessons survey the Old Testament, and the final 80 lessons survey the New Testament. Where appropriate, lessons include apologetics material confirming the accuracy of the biblical record, as well as historical background and life application.

## Summary

- 200-lesson, four-year curriculum (50 lessons per year); but take as long as you need to get through it
- Available in six age levels: Pre-K-1, Grades 2-3, Grades 4-5, Middle School, High School, Adult
- Chronological Bible teaching for all levels
- Synchronized lessons—all ages study the same Scriptures each week
- Based on the ESV

# How to Use ABC

## Teacher Kit Components

Answers Bible Curriculum includes all the elements needed for you to teach your students with excellence while engaging them in the learning process. Each unit of lessons includes the following items:

**Teacher Guide**—Ten lessons with lesson overview, background material, preparation instructions, scripted lesson, activity instructions, etc. The tenth lesson of each unit is a review lesson.

**Student Guide**—One approximately 60-page book for students with lesson background material, space for taking notes in class, and application questions.

**Family Devotional**—One devotional guide that follows and expands on the lessons. This was created to assist parents in having family devotions and reinforcing the ABC lesson content. Additional devotionals may be purchased for families in the church.

**Classroom Posters**—These large classroom posters enhance the lessons and provide visual reminders of important truths. The posters for this unit include:

The Attributes of God

Books of the Bible

Optional, but highly recommended for students and integrated into the lessons, is the *Seven C's of History Timeline*. This large wall chart covers biblical and historical events from Creation (4004 BC) to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. It follows the chronology of Archbishop James Ussher and helps students to understand the flow of history and to see how biblical events fit with secular events.

## Teacher Digital Resources

When you purchased Answers Bible Curriculum, you received access to a digital library that contains items such as activity instructions, lesson illustrations, video clips, and PowerPoint

presentations. These may be accessed at [MyAnswers.com/abc-resources](http://MyAnswers.com/abc-resources) using the Resources Code inside the back cover of this Teacher Guide. Be sure to leave enough time to look at the Lesson Preparation section of the lesson so that any needed items can be printed or gathered prior to class.

You may also purchase these resources on a USB flash drive from [AnswersBookstore.com](http://AnswersBookstore.com) or by calling 800-778-3390.

## Teacher Guide

We have designed the lessons so that they are easy to teach and provide everything needed to successfully guide your students in understanding the Bible and knowing God—the author of the Bible. Here is a breakdown of what is included in each lesson and how to get the most out of it.

## Lesson Overview

**Lesson Focus**—Each lesson has a short statement with the main theme of the lesson for that week.

**Key Passages**—These are the Bible passages that will be studied in the lesson. Your teaching will be more rewarding if you familiarize yourself with the key passages before class.

**Objectives**—Each lesson teaches specific learning objectives. These are what we expect the students will understand by the end of the lesson.

**Memory Verse**—Students will work on memorizing two passages per unit. Our hope is that this will enable the students to really learn these Scriptures—to hide them in their hearts—and to know them well enough that they will be able to recite them from memory not only at the end of the unit but also at the end of the year!

## Lesson Preparation

This chart shows you everything you need to do to prepare for each week's lesson and the

materials needed. Be sure to consult this several days before class so that you can choose optional videos, gather supplies, and print necessary materials from the Teacher Digital Resources.

**Optional Supplements**—Many of the lessons include optional video clips and/or a PowerPoint presentation. These should be previewed and then incorporated into the lesson where appropriate. Slide numbers provided in the lessons pertain to the PowerPoint presentations. These items are located in the Teacher Digital Resources.

## Prepare to Share

We have provided background information to help you understand the biblical and historical context of the passage being studied. Where appropriate, we have also included apologetic information that will confirm the truth of the Scriptures.

## Lesson Elements

The lessons are broken down into several elements to make it easier for you to teach and to allow for flexibility. We realize that some teachers have the luxury of a full hour (or more!) for Sunday school, while others may have only 20 minutes of teaching time. We have planned our lessons to take about 45–50 minutes to teach. Of course, this will vary greatly depending on your class size, student maturity level, etc.

**Come On In**—The Come On In is usually a question for the students to start thinking

about or for you to discuss with those who arrive to class early.

**Studying God’s Word**—This is the main teaching part of the lesson and includes the introduction, Bible study, and application. The lesson is written in a Say–Ask format. Inexperienced teachers, or substitutes, will easily be able to step in and teach the lesson by following the script, while experienced teachers will want to become familiar with the content and “make it their own.” Throughout the lesson, you will see margin notes with teacher tips, definitions, and other lesson elements. These are included to assist you in planning and teaching the lesson.

Most lessons include an activity that is either done in small groups or individually. It may be a Bible study or a group discussion.

**Group Prayer Time**—We encourage you to pray with your students before they are dismissed. Use the prayer points as a springboard for your own prayers—appropriate for your class. If time allows, you may want to take prayer requests from your students at this time.

It is our prayer that these lessons will encourage you, challenge you, and enable you to teach God’s Word effectively, and that your students will develop a lifelong faith, founded on God’s holy Word, so that their lives will demonstrate a deep trust in Christ and reflect his character. To God be the glory!

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# Unit 1 Syllabus

- Lesson 1** God's Word Is Our Foundation Psalm 19:7–11, 86:11, 119:105
- Lesson 2** Attributes of God Exodus 34:4–8, 20:5–6; Romans 5:8;  
1 John 4:7–21; Psalm 90:1–6
- Lesson 3** We Can Know God Exists Genesis 1:1–2; Exodus 3:13–15;  
John 18:1–6; Romans 1:18–23;  
1 Corinthians 1:18–31
- Lesson 4** The Trinity Genesis 1:1–3; Psalm 33:6; Hebrews 11:3;  
John 1:1–5; Isaiah 44:23–24;  
Colossians 1:15–17; Psalm 104:30;  
Matthew 3:13–17
- Lesson 5** God's Word Guides Us 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21;  
Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:13–18
- Lesson 6** God Preserves His Word Luke 24:13–32; Jeremiah 36:1–4, 36:17–32
- Lesson 7** God's Word Is Complete John 14:25–26, 21:24–25;  
Revelation 22:18–19; Deuteronomy 4:2,  
12:32; Proverbs 30:6
- Lesson 8** Don't Change God's Word Deuteronomy 18:17–22; Galatians 1:6–9;  
Revelation 22:18–19
- Lesson 9** The Gospel Is Good News Genesis 1:31–2:4, 3:6–7, 3:21–23, 6:5–8,  
8:1, 8:15–17, 11:1–9; Romans 3:19–26, 5:12,  
5:18–19; John 1:14–17; 1 Corinthians 15:1–5;  
2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 21:1–8
- Lesson 10** Unit Review



# God's Word Is Our Foundation

*God's Word—the foundation for our lives—is the standard we use to judge every thought.*

## *Lesson Focus*

The Bible is perfect and true, the completely trustworthy starting point for understanding the world. Though our own viewpoint is distorted, the Bible gives us perfect wisdom and can change our lives.

## *Key Passages*

Psalm 19:7–11, 86:11, 119:105

## *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Analyze their use of the Bible as the starting point for making decisions.
- List qualities of God's Word from the study passages.

## *Memory Verse*

**Psalm 119:89–90** Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

# Lesson Preparation

## *Come On In*

Write on the board, “What are the most pressing problems in our society today?” Have students make a short list for discussion.

## *Studying God’s Word*

For the What is God’s Word? Activity, use Student Guides or print the activity from the Teacher Digital Resources.

# Optional Supplements

## *Video Clips*

Preview the recommended video(s) before class. If appropriate, show to your class and discuss before, during, or after the lesson.

- One Solitary Book (3:18)
- Teaching God’s Word (2:32)
- Accuracy of Scripture (9:31)
- Our Starting Point (11:25)

## *PowerPoint*

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 1*.

# Prepare to Share

## Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Ever since Satan in the form of a serpent cast doubt on God's instructions in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1–4), people have questioned the authority of God's Word. As descendants of Adam, we have inherited a sinful nature (Romans 5:12, Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8–10), which corrupts our human reasoning, questions God's authority, and prevents us from embracing the truth.

The Bible says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). This reminds us that we cannot move along the path of life without God's Word providing the light of truth to guide us. The Bible enables us to see the world as it truly is. Without the understanding that Scripture gives, we are lost in the dark, wondering how to accurately interpret good and evil, God and man, right and wrong. We are left with a distorted view

of history, science, and society. The testimony of the Lord, however, is undistorted and sure (Psalm 19:7).

In Psalm 19, King David powerfully reveals the supremacy of Scripture. The perfection of the Word leads to conversion of the soul, the surety of the Word brings wisdom, the righteousness of the Word rejoices the heart, and the purity of the Word lights the way. The Word of God is clean, true, and righteous, producing the fear of the Lord necessary for repentance. Verse 11 summarizes the intention of the Word—that we may be warned to keep the commandments and achieve the promised reward.

Those who stand in awe of God, who are bound to him without compromise, and who submit their minds to the teaching of Scripture are those who have a solid foundation and are able to connect the Bible to real life.

Our response to God and his Word should be to join the Psalmist in praying, "Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name" (Psalm 86:11).

## Historical/Apologetics Background

The proper role of apologetics is to confirm what we know of God through his Word. It is not a series of explanations attempting to prove that the Bible is true or that there is a God.

As Christians, we start with the assumption that God exists and that his Word is true. This serves as the starting point for our beliefs. This is called *presuppositional thinking* because we are presupposing that what God says about himself is true.

Jesus set the example for us in this way of thinking through his life, ministry, and teaching. All of Jesus' messages presupposed that the Scriptures were true.

He knew the Scriptures so well that learned men marveled (John 7:15). He quoted Scripture as historical fact, referencing some of the most attacked accounts in the Bible, including creation (Matthew 19:4–5), Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:37–39), Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15, 11:23–24), Lot and his wife (Luke 17:28–32), and Jonah and the fish (Matthew 12:39–41).

He said the writings of Moses are more powerful than even someone rising from the dead (Luke 16:29–31).

He defended himself against Satan with God's Word (Matthew 4:4–10).

In the same way, we must rely on God's Word as the starting point for all of our judgments and beliefs. Others may insist that we "leave the Bible out of it" when discussing God, creation, absolute truth, morality, science, or the Bible itself. However, we cannot and must not. Christians stand on the Word of God—it is our foundation (Luke 6:47–49). Everything we believe and how we live are based on what it says.

Disregarding the Scriptures would result in disaster because our foundation would be destroyed. Our starting point is and must always be the Bible. We see the importance of this from the very beginning. Even in the garden of Eden, the battle was over the authority of the Word of God. The serpent asked Eve, "Did God really say that?" (Genesis 3:1).

We are facing a crisis of unbelief among young people in our culture today. One reason for this is that so many have discounted the book of Genesis. They are asking, “Did God really do that?” and being told, “No, he did not, and you don’t have to believe it.”

This is a sad state of affairs. It wasn’t too long ago that Genesis was taken literally and there was little controversy over its interpretation. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, the history of Genesis came under attack by scientists who began to accept the idea of millions of years of history rather than the thousands of years God records in his Word.

This interpretation brought compromise in the areas of biology—Darwinian evolution replacing God’s creation of kinds; geology—millions of years replacing the flood history of Genesis; anthropology—man descended from ape-like ancestors replacing God’s creation of man in his own image; astron-

omy—the big bang replacing God’s amazing account of speaking the universe into existence.

As our culture has adopted these secular views, the Bible has been disconnected from reality and consequently is becoming less and less relevant—especially to the younger generations. These compromises have torn down the foundations of biblical authority and trust in God’s Word. The result? Jesus gave us the answer when he asked Nicodemus, “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” (John 3:12).

Many no longer believe the earthly things that Jesus was referring to. And, consequently, even the heavenly things—redemption, hope, eternity with God, forgiveness, Christ’s resurrection, the Trinity, and judgment—are no longer of any interest to us. It is time to get back to the foundational beliefs of the Word of God, beginning in Genesis.



# Studying God's Word

## Introduction

Today we begin a journey that will take us through four years of study of the Bible. You will probably find this study different from studies you have done in the past. It will blend apologetics (defending the faith) with inductive Bible study to help equip you to answer challenges posed by skeptics and to strengthen your own faith and devotion to Christ.



Slides #1–3

- ▶ Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

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## Walking in Truth

We are going to start by taking a look at several passages from Scripture that talk about using the Bible as our starting point. The key theme of our lesson today is the authority of God's Word in every area of our lives. At the end of this lesson, I hope you will be able to identify some of the important qualities of God's Word and analyze how you use God's Word in your life.

- ▶ Encourage your students to take notes in their Student Guides during the lesson.

### Psalm 86:11

Let's read Psalm 86:11 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to observe what it is saying to us. This process is an important part of understanding what God's Word is telling us. *In Lesson 5, the inductive method will be explained further, including the basic ideas of observing, interpreting, and applying the text of Scripture.*

You are probably aware that the Bible is filled with figurative language, especially in the poetic verses of the psalms. We are going to look at how that figurative language is used to refer to the words of God and how they apply to our lives.

- ❓ **Who is speaking and who is being spoken to?** *David is talking to God. The title of the psalm indicates David as the author, and God is directly addressed.*
- ❓ **What two requests does David have for the Lord?** *To be taught God's way and to have his heart united so that he might fear God. These are direct observations of what the text is saying.*
- ❓ **David talks figuratively about walking in God's truth. What does he mean by this phrase?** *Walk is often used in Scripture to refer to a pattern of life or course one follows. Psalm 1:1 uses this idea to talk about "walking" in the counsel of the ungodly.*
- ❓ **Can anyone think of any other passages where the "Christian walk" is referenced?** *Answers may include John 8:12, Romans 6:4, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Ephesians 4:1, and many others.*



Slide #4

- ▶ Since this is the first lesson, you will be laying some groundwork for the lessons to come. The early lessons are intended to build a solid foundation on the authority of the Word of God.

When we study the Bible, we start by observing what the text says. But there may be phrases or words that need to be interpreted. In this verse we have figures of speech that we need to interpret. We use the normal use of language, immediate context of the surrounding passages, and the rest of Scripture (using cross references) to help us understand the meaning of the text. Sometimes we are helped by understanding the culture of the writer and other historical elements.

- ? How could we summarize (or restate) David’s desire? *David desires to live his life in light of God’s truth. Here is where we can take the truths and begin to find application to our own lives.*

Look at the third line in the verse. Some translations present the idea of having an undivided heart—one that is committed totally to God. If we rephrase his words (an example of interpretation), David is asking God to give him a single focus in his life. That focus is on God so that David might please God in the way he thinks and acts.

### Discover the Truth

David desired to live his life according to God’s principles of truth; and that should be the goal of every Christian.

## A Lamp and a Light

The Bible is God’s true and sure Word to us, and we should walk in the way it instructs. This truth is one that we see throughout the Bible, and we will look at several more examples today.

### Psalm 119:105

Let’s read Psalm 119:105 together to see another metaphor used to talk about this idea. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? What is being compared in this verse? *God’s Word is compared to a lamp and a light.*
- ? What figure of speech is used in this verse? *A metaphor is used to compare two things.*

We have another metaphor to interpret in this verse. Just because the psalms are written as poetry and not direct statements of truth doesn’t mean that they don’t contain great truths; we simply have to examine the language a bit more carefully to understand the ideas being described.

If we scan ahead through verse 112 in this psalm, we see that it is filled with phrases like “righteous ordinances,” “Your word,” “statutes,” and “precepts.”

- ? What are all of these phrases referring to? *They all refer to God’s revealed truth, similar to the “word” in verse 105. Today, we have that recorded in the Bible.*

 Slide #5

► Recognizing the type of literature, poetry in this case, is an important part of accurately interpreting a passage of Scripture.

- ? The metaphor is referring to God's revealed truths as a lamp that lights a path. How does this relate to Psalm 86:11 that we just looked at? *The idea of walking in light of God's word is common to both passages. Connecting similar passages helps us interpret Scripture.*

As we walk, we take one step at a time. The lamp helps to illuminate the path in front of us so that we don't go off the path or step into any danger. As we go about our daily lives, God's Word should guide our decisions just as a lamp guides our steps in the dark.

Another way we could think about this is looking at the world through a pair of glasses. Any of you who wear glasses or contacts can attest to the fact that the world looks fuzzy without them. You might see a sign ahead, but you can't read it to give you direction. You might look down at a book only to see some black squiggles on a page. The Bible can function as a set of glasses. If we look at the world through the lens of Scripture, we see things very differently from the way the world sees things. As Christians, we trust what God has revealed to us, and we view the world from a biblical perspective.

- ? As you came in, I asked you to think about problems in society. What are some of the problems you wrote down or thought of? *Answers will vary but will likely focus on abortion, euthanasia, family structure, marriage issues, government, crime, teaching evolutionary ideas, etc. Write some examples on the board and ask how the world's view of these issues differs from the Bible's teaching. For example, the world looks at abortion as an issue of choice and convenience, but the Bible teaches that it is murder and the killing of a person made in the image of God.*

 Slide #6

While there is no disputing that these ideas are problems within our society, they are really more like symptoms of an underlying problem. The real problem is that people don't take God's view of these issues into account. If God's ordinances, precepts, and words were truly and sincerely valued, these issues wouldn't exist on the scale they do in our society. If people's hearts were truly united to God's, and they used his words to guide their steps, they would not choose to have an abortion, abandon their families, or teach evolution in the schools. Of course, even Christians sin against God in these ways, and we should be looking at the sin within ourselves as we confront the sins of those in the world.

When we put on our biblical glasses, the right choices in all of these circumstances come into focus. Rather than being problems, all of these social ills are symptoms of a lack of authority. God's Word has been set aside by a majority of those in our society—sadly, even among those who claim Christ as their Savior. Rather than using God's Word to guide their steps, they look inside themselves for inspiration and do whatever they think is right. Just like in the time of the judges, the King of kings is not honored, and each person does what is right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6, 21:25). So, what's the root of the problem? The Bible is not the authority in the lives of individuals as they willfully rebel against their Creator.

- ❓ So, let me ask you a question in light of these cultural concerns: Is it more important for people in our country to get back to traditional family values or to look to the Bible as the absolute authority? (Should we fight for traditional marriage or biblical marriage?) *This is likely a touchy subject in many circles, so take care to say this with the right tone. Many may not have thought about this issue from a biblical perspective. Ask them to consider their answer in light of Scripture and provide passages that would support their thinking. We should not desire to return to a tradition from the “good ol’ days,” but to point people to God’s Word and his authority.*

This is what it means to put on biblical glasses—every thought must be taken captive to the obedience of Christ as it says in 2 Corinthians 10:4–6. We can’t look at everything through a talk radio filter, a political filter, or a coffee chat filter; we need to use the Bible as our absolute authority. All these problems are symptoms. The real problem is sin within the hearts of people leading them to reject the Bible as the absolute authoritative source that it is. As we proclaim the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible as God’s Word, people’s hearts and minds will be changed through the Holy Spirit’s transforming power. As individual lives are changed and they are disciplined to walk in the ways of Christ, we may see changes in the broader culture. But that change in culture should not be our main goal—proclaiming the gospel to the glory of God should be. The Bible does not call us to transform the culture, but to preach the gospel and make disciples of all nations.

### Discover the Truth

- ❓ Who can summarize the key principle we can draw from Psalm 119:105, and how can we apply it to our lives? *We must see God’s Word as the absolute authority in every area of our lives, seeing the world through biblical glasses and taking every step in the light of his Word. Our Christian “walk” should be down a path illuminated by all of the truths found in the Bible.*

And if we are going to use the Bible as our lamp, we will have to study and know its message. We will have to understand how it is structured and where to go for certain answers to specific questions. And that is what we intend to do through this curriculum—develop a truly biblical worldview with the Bible as the authority in every area of our lives.

- Have the students turn to the What Is God’s Word? activity in their Student Guides. Or use the worksheet from the Teacher Digital Resources.

 Slides #7–10

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### What is God’s Word? Activity

*Have the students look at Psalm 19:7–11 and identify the various roles of God’s Word. They will fill out the three-column chart in their Student Guides (or print and pass out the worksheet from the Teacher Digital Resources). The first one is done for them. Take a few minutes to fill in the columns with the descriptors from verses 7–11, and then discuss them as a group (or in several small groups if you have a large class).*

- ❓ Who would like to read your list of the different ways God’s Word is identified in this passage? *Law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear, rules.*
- ❓ If someone was using a different version, what other words were used in your version? *Allow responses.*

As we mentioned earlier, the psalms are written in poetic form. In this passage we see that many parallel ideas are expressed. This is a form of Hebrew poetry and communicates a broad understanding of what is contained in God’s Word and how it impacts our lives.

- ❓ What adjectives are used to describe God’s revelation to us? *Perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, righteous, more desirable than gold, sweeter than honey, providing a warning, etc.*

These are different ways of communicating the attributes of God’s Word in a repeated pattern. Notice in verse 10, the parallel ideas of being “more” desirable/sweeter than gold and honey.

- ❓ And what roles in our lives does God’s Word play? *Reviving our souls, making us wise, rejoicing our heart, enlightening our eyes, warning us, providing rewards, etc.*

### **Connect to the Truth**

These may be ideas that you are familiar with, but when is the last time you really sat down and examined your life in light of God’s Word? As Christians, this should be our standard of truth, our guide for every step in our lives, and the truth that we proclaim to those who are outside of the faith. When we face a trial or question in our lives, we can always look to God’s Word as the source of truth, whether in the direct commands given there or the examples of righteous men and women—especially Jesus Christ. It is when we move away from this truth that our lives (and, by extension, the society) slide into sin and we begin to walk the path in our own strength and without a “lamp” to guide our steps.

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### **Application**

Now that we have looked at several passages about the usefulness of God’s Word—and there are many more we could examine—let’s take a minute to recap what we have learned. After that, we’ll discuss how we put these ideas into action in our lives.

- ❓ What roles should Scripture play in our lives? *Scripture should be the authority that we look to in every area of our lives. It is a lamp to light our path, a source of unity with God’s heart, a tool for making the simple wise, etc.*
- ❓ Psalm 119:105 tells us that the Word of God is like a lamp that lights the steps in our path. Using a modern metaphor, in what way can we think of the Bible as a pair of glasses? *If we look at the world without filtering what we see through the teachings of Scripture, we see things in a distorted way. The*

truths from the Bible help us see the world “clearly”—as it really is. Since God is the Creator of the world, we can only rightly understand the world by beginning with what he has revealed to us.

- ? **What are the consequences for individuals (and societies by implication) who do not see the Bible as the authority they must submit to?** *Immoral behavior gets excused, and everyone does what is right in their own eyes. We see excuses for abortion, homosexuality, divorce, and even murder.*
- ? **Who is the only person who has fully submitted to God’s Word to guide his life?** *Jesus Christ is the only one who has ever faithfully obeyed all of the statutes and principles in God’s Word.*

 Slides #11–15

So now that we have uncovered some truths from Scripture about the usefulness of God’s Word, let’s think about how we can specifically apply these ideas to our lives. What we have been talking about is called a worldview. Whether you realize it or not, everyone has one. As Christians, our worldview should be firmly founded upon the truths God has revealed to us in the Bible.

- ? **Everyone with whom you interact has a worldview. In what areas do you see someone’s worldview having the most impact on that individual’s life?** *Lifestyle decisions are determined by a person’s worldview (i.e., marriage, sexuality, money, raising children, voting, etc.), but ultimately, every area of life is colored by a person’s own worldview. Every decision we make is based on what we believe about God, the nature of man, and what we look to as the source of truth.*
- ? **Where do you see a difference in worldview causing conflict in your life and relationships with others?** *Answers will vary but may include raising children, relationships with co-workers or fellow students, etc.*
- ? **Why do people reject the Bible as the absolute authority?** *Many people want to be in charge of their own lives and reject God’s authority. Others believe the Bible is outdated, full of myths, or mistranslated and untrustworthy.*
- ? **How would you attempt to change a person’s understanding of the Bible’s authority and reliability?** *Many will be unsure about this question, and this would be a great time to assure them that this course is designed to help equip them to deal with such challenges. Ultimately, the message of the gospel received with the power of the Holy Spirit is the only thing that can change hearts and minds. We can get people to live moral lives by punishing disobedience, but true change only comes through a heart renewed by the gospel.*
- ? **Do you recognize any areas in your life where you are not looking to God’s Word as the absolute authority? How can you change your attitudes?** *Discuss various answers, encouraging students to acknowledge where they are living in sin and confessing that sin to others (where appropriate) and to God, as well as seeking appropriate help from brothers and sisters in pursuing holiness of life. Be sure to remind the students that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1–8) and that God will freely forgive us of our sins when we confess them to him (1 John 1:8–9).*

You made a list of the descriptions and roles of God's Word as you examined Psalm 119. Throughout the week, I would encourage you to meditate on this passage and think about your life in light of these truths. Are there any areas where you are not submitting to the clear teachings of Scripture? Are you clear about how to look at the world in light of Scripture? What decisions are you facing, and how does Scripture inform you about those decisions? Whom could you ask to come alongside you as you seek to grow to be more like Jesus?

As we study and learn together, let each of us be praying that we would live our lives in submission to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.



## Group Prayer Time

*Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.*

- Praise God for his unchanging character.
- Ask God that each person would have boldness to share the hope of Christ with others.
- Thank God for his justice and mercy toward sinners.





# Attributes of God

*God's attributes are demonstrated and described in Scripture.*

## *Lesson Focus*

God's attributes are demonstrated and described in Scripture. We must understand God for who he is according to his Word, or we will contrive a false god based on our fallible thoughts and emotions.

## *Key Passages*

Exodus 34:4–8, 20:5–6; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:7–21; Psalm 90:1–6

## *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Explain the necessity of using God's Word when identifying and/or explaining the attributes of God.
- Describe some of the attributes of God found in Scripture.

## *Memory Verse*

**Psalm 119:89–90** Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

# Lesson Preparation

## *Come On In*

Students will discuss what they think God is like. Write, "What is God like?" on the board to start the students thinking.

## *Studying God's Word*

For the Worshipping God through Prayer Activity, use Student Guides.

# Optional Supplements

## *Video Clips*

Preview the recommended video(s) before class. If appropriate, show to your class and discuss before, during, or after the lesson.

- Cloud of Biblical Witnesses (4:42)
- God's Authority and the 7C's (7:00)
- God's Power (5:15)
- Mystery of Life (2:28)

## *PowerPoint*

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 2*.

# Prepare to Share

## Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

What is God like? How can we presume to answer this question? Our God is incomprehensible—he can never be fully understood. In fact, as believers we anticipate an eternity of discovering new things about him.

David said of him, “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable” (Psalm 145:3), and “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all” (1 Chronicles 29:11). We can’t say it any better than the Apostle Paul, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways” (Romans 11:33)! The glimpses of God we observe from his Word are far from complete.

## Historical/Apologetics Background

Because there is no way to comprehend the vast depth of our holy God, we are at risk of conjuring up in our minds what we want him to be. This is not acceptable. We can only begin to know who God is by the revelation of his Word.

One attribute of God is all-loving (1 John 4:7–21). But this attribute has been skewed by many Christians and non-Christians alike. The tendency of many is to make God a type of butler—one who waits at our beck and call and exists in order to answer our demands for blessing and comfort. In our world today, we seldom witness the awe and wonder his very name deserves.

This attitude reeks of misunderstanding the holiness of God. His holiness demands that he despise each and every sin committed. Knowing his frightful hatred for sin should bring us to a reverent and godly fear of the one who is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:28–29). Only true fear of the Lord will bring knowledge (Proverbs 1:7).

It is not until we fear God for who he is that we will humbly begin to understand the depths of his love—which is beyond all love. It is amaz-

ing that he would love us so much to send his only Son to die a horrible death in order to provide forgiveness to all who would believe (John 3:16). Because of the depth of his love, he was willing to offer the life of Jesus, who committed no sin yet was made sin for us, so that we could be made the righteousness of God (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

God is love, yes. But his definition of love goes way beyond the scope of ours. His love is demonstrated in the gospel—that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

The gospel through Jesus Christ was God’s plan from the very beginning. When God created Adam and Eve in the very good world, they saw God clearly. But when they disobeyed God, they were no longer welcome to walk with him (Genesis 3:23–24). They were thrown out of the garden because God cannot dwell with evil or wickedness (Psalm 5:4). But even then, God revealed his plan—his love—to redeem a people to himself through the Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). Everyone who would repent of their

sins and turn to the Savior would be forgiven and given an inheritance with Christ.

Others have wanted to see God as Adam and Eve did. We read that Moses was once bold enough to ask to see more of God (Exodus 33:18). And we know that Moses would die if he saw the face of God. However, Moses did get a glimpse of God's glory passing by as he hid in the cleft of the rock (Exodus 33:22-23).

Jesus came to reveal God to sinners. The Bible tells us that in Jesus we know of God yet have not seen him: "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." (John 1:18). And Paul wrote to Timothy, describing God as the one "who alone has immortality, who

dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen" (1 Timothy 6:16).

God keeps himself in unapproachable light. We cannot see him as Adam and Eve once did. But he promises one day we will. And what a day that will be when his children will be like him, for they will see him as he is (1 John 3:2)! How we long for the day we will once again see God, talk with him, and enjoy the fellowship that was originally intended but broken because of sin. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).



# Studying God's Word

## Introduction

In our last lesson we talked about the importance of understanding our worldview. Everyone looks at the world around them through a set of “glasses” that influence how they understand what they see. While some people might claim to be unbiased or neutral, everyone has a bias. The question is, which bias is the best bias to be biased by?

- ? What set of “glasses” should we be looking through to understand the world around us? *We should be using the Bible as a lens through which we look at the world. God's Word should be our starting point as we examine every idea, question, and situation we encounter as we seek to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).*

So, why is the Bible the best bias? It is the Word of the God who created everything in the universe. As the Creator, we can only rightly understand the world by starting from what God has revealed to us. And as we saw from the passages we looked at last week, God's Word is trustworthy and true in all it sets before us. It is a lamp to our feet and the only sure source of guidance for our lives (Psalm 119:105).

- Write, “What is God like?” on the board, and encourage people to discuss this idea as they wait for the lesson to begin.

 Slide #1–3

- Encourage your students to take notes in their Student Guides during the lesson.

 Slide #4

- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

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## God Declared His Attributes to Moses

This lesson will focus on how God has revealed himself to us in Scripture so that we can understand, at least in a small way, what he is like.

### Exodus 34:4–8

Let's read Exodus 34:4–8 together. This passage gives us amazing access to God as he has revealed himself to us. *Have someone read the passage aloud as others follow along. Remind the students they can take notes in their Student Guides.*

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to observe what it is saying to us by asking basic questions of the text. We are going to continue to apply the principles of hermeneutics that we briefly discussed last week (observe the text, interpret the ideas, apply the truths to our lives), as we look to draw truth out of the text (*exegesis*) rather than imposing our ideas on the text (*eisegesis*).

- ? Who are the characters? *God and Moses.*
- ? Where did this take place? *Mt. Sinai, though the exact location is unknown.*
- ? Are any phrases or words repeated? *Proclaimed.*
- ? What type of literature is this passage? *History or historical narrative; it presents a historical account of the interaction between Moses and God.*

 Slides #5–7

 Slide #8

**Exegesis:**  
Drawing truth out of a text

**Eisegesis:**  
Imposing our ideas onto a text

- ? **What actions are ascribed to Moses in this passage?** *Cutting the tablets, rising and going up the mountain, and bowing and worshipping God.*
- ? **What actions are ascribed to God in this passage?** *Commanding Moses, descending in a cloud, standing by Moses, passing before Moses, and proclaiming his name.*
- ? **Are there any figures of speech in the text that need to be interpreted?** *Some anthropomorphic (attributing man's characteristics to God) language is used to describe God descending in a cloud and standing with Moses.*
- ? **What is the biblical context of the passage? When and where are the events of this passage taking place?** *Moses had previously been on Mt. Sinai, receiving from God the original tablets containing the Ten Commandments, when the children of Israel had forgotten how God had delivered them from their bondage in Egypt. Aaron had made them a golden calf, and the people had fallen into idolatry. God's anger had been aroused against them, but Moses had pleaded with God to have mercy, which God in his mercy had chosen to extend to this rebellious people. Moses had broken the original tablets upon returning to the camp and seeing the people worshipping the golden calf. In Exodus 34:6–7, God was meeting privately with Moses on Mt. Sinai to renew his covenant with the children of Israel and to replace the set of tablets broken by Moses.*
- ? **What two responses do we see from Moses in this passage?** *Verse 4 tells us that Moses obeyed God's command to prepare the tablets and meet him on the mountain. Verse 8 tells us that Moses was moved to worship as God revealed his character to Moses—a response that we can hope to imitate.*
- ? **What does the passage tell us about God?** *God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving, and faithful to keep his promises; yet he is a holy God who is just in dealing with sin.*

 Slide #9

### Exodus 20:5–6

- ? **Do other passages in Scripture relate to this passage?** *Exodus 20:5–6. Many other passages reiterate the specific attributes of God expressed in this passage. Write some of these down on the board to give students the opportunity to record them and make cross-references later.*

### Romans 5:8

- ? **Let's consider a verse from the New Testament that relates. How does Romans 5:8 point to Christ/the gospel?** *God represents himself as merciful and gracious. We see the ultimate fulfillment of that in Christ's substitutionary death for sinners.*

 Slide #10

### Discover the Truth

The main idea of this passage is God's revelation of his character to Moses—and to us as we have it recorded for our benefit. Since this lesson is about understanding what God is like, let's make a list of the attributes that God has revealed in this passage. God's character has so many facets that we often forget about some of them. We tend to focus on particular

aspects that are our favorites, but it is important that we remember that God is infinite, and we should worship him for all that he is.

- ❓ Knowing that there are some 1,500 years between Moses' writing and Paul's writing, what other attribute is evident in the consistent description of his character? *God is unchanging, or immutable, so his love is a constant part of his character.*

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## God Is Love

Let's look at another revelation of God's character.

### 1 John 4:7–21

 Slides #11–16

- ❓ Would someone read 1 John 4:7–21? *Have someone read the verses aloud.*

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to understand what it is telling us about God's character. We are particularly interested in verses 8 and 16, but we want to make sure that we read the verses in context, not just picking and choosing words here and there. Reading an individual verse, apart from its context, can lead to misunderstanding or misapplying the verse. For example, if we isolate the phrase "perfect love casts out fear" from the rest of the passage, we might use this verse to comfort someone who is afraid of spiders. But, in context, as believers we are not to fear God's judgment (verse 17) because of what Christ has accomplished for us on the cross (verses 10, 14, and 17).

- ❓ Who are the characters? *God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit interacting with believers.*
- ❓ Who is the audience? *The specific body of believers is unidentified, other than it seems clear John was familiar with them and understood them to be familiar with who he was. The use of the term "beloved" in verses 7 and 11 along with other clues from the text make this clear.*
- ❓ What actions are believers called to in this passage? *Living through Christ (v. 9), loving one another (v. 11), testifying of the Savior (v. 14), confessing and abiding in Christ (v. 15), knowing and believing the love God has for us (v. 16), not fearing judgment (vv. 17–18), loving God (v. 19–20), and loving our brother (v. 21).*
- ❓ What type of literature is this passage? *Epistle; a letter of instruction written to other Christians from the apostle.*
- ❓ Are there any figures of speech in the text? *"Abides in love," "abides in God"; we do not actually live or abide in God, but the word picture is of an intimate relationship between God and his children.*
- ❓ What is the biblical context of the passage? *This epistle was written many years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. 1 John 2:18–19 points to the rise of false teachers, which have come from among the ranks of the churches as the church was growing. False teachers are to be tested against God's standard of love.*

It is clear that this is a rich passage, and we could glean many truths from it, but there is clearly one overarching theme concerning God's character in this passage.

- ? Are any phrases or words repeated? *God is love.*
- ? What is the main point of the passage? *God is the ultimate standard of love. We define love based on God and his actions, not our romantic ideas of love.*
- ? What does the passage tell us about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit? *Together, as the triune God, they are the very standard of love. We can love God and others because God first loved us and has given us his Spirit.*
- ? How does this passage point to Christ/the gospel? *John 3:16 summarizes God's selfless and sacrificial love for lost mankind. This is the propitiation spoken of in verse 10.*
- ? If we looked at the natural world as it is today, would we easily conclude from what we see that God is a God of love? *Since the world is full of death and suffering, we would not likely conclude that God is love. Many have pointed to the nature of the world today to malign the character of God.*
- ? So, how do we reconcile a loving God with the fact of all of the suffering in the world? *We must remember that this is a fallen creation and is not how God originally intended things to be. This concept will be covered in more detail as the course continues. Here is a great example of why we must use the Bible as our starting point to understand the world around us.*

### Discover the Truth

- ? What attribute of God's character can we clearly identify from this passage? *Loving. Refer to the Attributes of God Poster.*

 Slide #17

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## God Is Eternal

Now let's go back to the Old Testament.

### Psalm 90:1–6

Let's read Psalm 90:1–6 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? Who is the author of this psalm? *Moses.*
- ? Who is the audience? *The psalm is identified as a prayer to God, but the children of Israel would have been the initial readers.*
- ? What is the context (biblical, historical, geographical, chronological) of the passage? *The generation of the children of Israel that left Egypt had been forbidden from entering the promised land due to their repeated rebellion. They were in the wilderness wanderings.*
- ? What type of literature is this passage? *Poetry; this is evident in the pattern of repeated ideas. This is different from what we would typically think of as poetry,*

 Slides #18–20

but it is a very common form in Hebrew poetry. The parallel ideas in verse 6 mark this form of poetry rather than a series of rhyming words.

- ❓ **Are there any words that are repeated?** The words “like” and “as” are used for several similes, an identifier of the poetic nature of this passage.
- ❓ **What are the similes used in verses 4–6 and what do they refer to?** The similes express the brevity of man and the eternity of God. Each is compared to the “thousand years” from verse 4. We are not to think that 1,000 years is exactly like yesterday (24 hours) or a watch in the night (three hours), but to realize that God is outside of time.
- ❓ **What is the phrase “everlasting to everlasting” intended to communicate?** This phrase brings us to think of the past and future eternity of God. Unlike us, God had no beginning and will have no end.
- ❓ **What is the main point of the passage?** The brevity of human life as compared to the eternity of God.
- ❓ **What does the passage tell us about God?** God is eternal and in sovereign control over the brief lives of humans.
- ❓ **Do other passages in Scripture relate to this passage, especially as it relates to the concept of time?** 2 Peter 3:8 contains a similar description of time, relating God’s eternal nature. If there are margin notes in the students’ Bibles, point out that there may be verses that are cross-referenced. These may also appear in different forms in electronic Bibles or apps.
- ❓ **How does this passage point to Christ/the gospel?** The certainty of our physical deaths and the brevity of our time here on earth point us to following truth: “Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

 Slide #21

### **Discover the Truth**

- ❓ **What key truth about God can we understand based on this passage?**  
*God is eternal.*

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## ***Worshipping God through Prayer Activity***

*Have the students examine the list of attributes discussed in this lesson and on the Attributes of God poster. Ask them to think about which of these they tend to focus on and which they may have neglected or forgotten recently. Have them write out a short prayer or meditation in their Student Guides that they can use throughout the next week to bring to remembrance those attributes they may have failed to worship God for.*

 Slide #22

**In your Student Guide you will find a space to write a short prayer or meditation. Think about the attributes of God we have talked about today, including those on the Attributes of God poster, and think about any of his attributes you might have forgotten about or neglected as you worship God in prayer. Give the students several minutes to complete the activity.**

## Connect to the Truth

Meditating on or offering worshipful prayers to God can help us remember how infinitely glorious God's attributes are. We tend to get stuck in ruts, praying the same things over and over. Looking to Scripture and recognizing and worshipping God for all of his attributes can help us remember the truths of God's vastness. Praying through a passage like Isaiah 40 or Job 38–40 can remind us of the greatness of God and our own smallness.

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### Application

As we have looked at these three passages of Scripture, we have only scratched the surface of God's attributes. He has revealed a portion of himself to us, but we must keep in mind that he alone is the eternal Creator whose attributes are infinite. As we will learn more about in a few weeks, God expresses these attributes in the three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Like a precious gem we hold up to the sun to see how the light dances across each of the faces in a different way, we can examine the attributes God has revealed to us. Let us all take time to read God's Word and meditate on his many glorious attributes. *Encourage students to use the lists created in the activity to meditate on and grow deeper in their relationship with the Lord.*

 Slides #23–25

- ?** Why is it important to understand all that the Bible has to say about God's attributes? *If we have a simplistic or incomplete view of God, our worship of him will be simple and incomplete. We should desire to know more about God so that we can worship him in truth and in the fullest expression of that truth.*
- ?** How can a study of God's attributes lead you into a deeper understanding of your salvation? *As we understand more about someone, we develop a deeper connection to them. The same is true of our relationship with God. As we study and learn more about him, our appreciation for his attributes grows.*
- ?** How do you see the attributes of God questioned by those in your school or workplace? How can you respond to these questions? *Discuss various answers. Encourage the students to engage others when they hear them questioning God's attributes or misrepresenting the true God, pointing them to the truths of Scripture as the only source to fully understand who God is and what he is like.*



## Group Prayer Time

*Be sure to pray with your students before you dismiss them.*

- Praise God for his unchanging character.
- Thank God for how he has revealed himself to us.
- Ask God for grace, that everyone will come to a deeper understanding of his character so that they might walk worthy of the calling they have received.



# We Can Know God Exists

*God is the eternal Creator. His existence makes sense of the entire universe.*

## *Lesson Focus*

God, the only eternal being, makes sense of the entire universe. The order seen in creation points to a Creator who is the one and only true God.

## *Key Passages*

Genesis 1:1–2; Exodus 3:13–15; John 18:1–6; Romans 1:18–23;  
1 Corinthians 1:18–31

## *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that God exists outside time and that he is the Creator of everything, including time.
- Explain how it is that every person knows God exists and why some deny that knowledge.

## *Memory Verse*

**Psalm 119:89–90** Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

# Lesson Preparation

## *Come On In*

Write on the board, "How do we prove God exists?" Allow students to discuss.

## *Studying God's Word*

For the Worldly Wisdom Activity, use Students Guides.

# Optional Supplements

## *Video Clips*

Preview the recommended video(s) before class. If appropriate, show to your class and discuss before, during, or after the lesson.

- Science (4:03)
- God Is Real (12:15)
- Common Designer (2:52)
- Creator Clearly Seen (4:43)
- Is There Really a God? (2:49)
- What's the Best Proof of Creation? (3:42)

## *PowerPoint*

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 3*.

# Prepare to Share

## Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

“How do I know God exists?” This is a question that has been and will be debated as long as sinners occupy the earth. First of all, as Christians who walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), we do not need to prove the existence of God. The Bible says that we accept God by faith—that we believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6). Because the Bible is our basis for all we believe, we believe in God as presented in the Bible.

God’s Word begins with the proclamation that he and he alone existed from eternity past: “In the beginning, God . . .” (Genesis 1:1). If he had wanted to prove himself to the world in a way our minds could grasp, he could have done that. God saw no need to explain further. Belief in him as the one true God comes by faith and trust in him and his Word.

Genesis 1 continues to describe this God who spoke the entire universe into existence. The order we see in creation—from the stars, solar systems, animal and plant life, to the natural laws of gravity, motion, and thermodynamics—gives evidence of an omnipotent Creator. There is no other explanation. The universe is not a result of random chance. It was created by one who was not created. There had to be someone who never came into being. There had to

be a Creator. God—the one true God—is that Creator, who was and is and is to come (Revelation 4:8).

As we look to the Scriptures, we see that God described himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM,” which essentially means *the one who is and will be* (Exodus 3:13–14). The eternal, self-existent nature of God is revealed through his Word and simply assumed. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John records that the Lord is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8). What more do we need? This describes the only holy, omnipotent, omniscient God of the universe—who was and is and always will be. He is not bound by time as we know it. He created time in the beginning (Genesis 1:1).

God in his mercy has also specifically revealed himself through his incredible creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). And the Apostle Paul tells us that since the creation of the world, God’s invisible attributes have been seen through creation, revealing his eternal power and Godhead—leaving those who do not believe in him without excuse (Romans 1:18–21). God does indeed exist. His existence is confirmed in Scripture and through his creation—and the wrath of God will be revealed from heaven against all who suppress the truth of his existence in unrighteousness.

## Historical/Apologetics Background

Look around you; what do you see? An amazingly designed universe—from the single cell to the vast and immeasurable solar system. And yet the debate for a Creator of such things rages. We can rest in God’s Word, “In the beginning, God . . .” (Genesis 1:1). We know that if something exists, it was somehow created into being. And as Christians we know who that Creator was. But what of folks who state there was no Creator—it all began with a bang, a very “big bang,” one that allegedly occurred billions of years ago in one tiny speck of mass and energy, a speck that would one day become everything we see today?

This story of the big bang originated with an attempt to completely discount the Bible and its account of our Creator God. Christians who buy into

it need to understand the atheistic beginnings of this secular story and why it cannot be “added” to the biblical account of Genesis 1 without destroying the Bible’s integrity.

From a practical standpoint, have you ever blown something up and then observed the pieces reassembling into a complex . . . anything? No, when buildings are demolished, they pretty much end up in a heap of debris with no order or design. And yet, the big bang proposed by some has produced intricate life and more. In fact, this notion claims that out of a random explosion and expansion of matter billions of years ago, life in its complexity and beauty—from the human body to the ant, from the wonder of the solar system to the universe beyond—has been organized

and arranged into the complex world we live in today by nothing more than random, natural processes.

But, we know that the very existence of design, order, natural laws, and principles in the universe demands that there was a Creator—an organizer, a designer—not a big bang. That Creator can only be the one true Creator God. The only one who has declared himself the Creator (Genesis 1), and the only one who proclaims that he himself is sustaining the universe—personally maintaining life and upholding all things by the word of his power (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3). This Creator, our God, is truly worthy to receive glory and honor and power—for he created all things, and by his will they exist and were created (Revelation 4:11)!

However, from the very beginning, people have wanted to be their own gods—and Satan is the primary encourager of this. The God of the Bible demands obedience, reverence, and accountability. The serpent asked Adam and Eve, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). Adam and Eve listened to the serpent, disregarding God’s Word, and sin, deceit, pride, evil, hatred, death, and suffering entered the world.

God will one day judge the sin of the world in righteousness (Psalm 96:13). Those who believe God’s Word know this to be true. However, many doubt the very existence of God and do not fear his judgment. These atheists boldly turn from the greatest commandment—“You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3)—to pursue the imaginings of their own minds.

In many ways, our culture has been shaped by these people who claim there is no God. We’ll look at a few of them here.

Charles Darwin, the father of evolution, although not a proclaimed atheist, was influenced immensely by his atheist grandfather Erasmus. Darwin’s idea of

evolution has changed the course of human history and is one of the greatest attacks on the Word of God in our modern time.

Karl Marx, referred to by some as the greatest thinker in all of history, once stated that religion is the opiate of the masses—impotence of the human mind to deal with occurrences it cannot understand.

Sigmund Freud, considered by some as psychology’s most famous figure, believed that religion was nothing more than an expression of underlying psychological neuroses and distress.

More recently, Madalyn Murray O’Hair was instrumental in removing prayer from the public schools in 1963. She believed that religion has caused more misery to all of mankind in every stage of human history than any other single idea.

And today we have those who are referred to as the “new atheists”—men such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens (now deceased)—and they are aggressively going after your children, your liberties, and your faith! Dawkins, a scientist and an active leader in this movement, believes that one of the things wrong with religion is that it teaches us to be satisfied with answers which are not answers at all. These men and others have accused Christians of “child abuse” for teaching their children the Bible and passing on their faith.

The worldview of these atheists is dangerous to our culture. However, as Christians we are confident in the promises of the Word of God. We must not lose heart. We must be committed to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and enthused about keeping God on his throne as Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all (Colossians 1:17). God has assured us that his Word is settled forever and his faithfulness will endure to all generations (Psalm 119:89–90).



# Studying God's Word

## Introduction

- ? In our last lesson we talked about the attributes of God. What were some of God's attributes we discussed? *Allow discussion. Merciful, gracious, slow to anger, just, holy, loving, eternal, etc.*

Today, we're going to be discussing how we can answer the question, "How do we know God exists?"



Slides #1–3

- Write on the board, "How do we prove God exists?"

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## God Is Eternal

Let's start with the very first verses of the Bible.

### Genesis 1:1–2

Let's read Genesis 1:1–2 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to observe what it is saying to us. Remember that we want to make sure we draw truth out of the Bible, not bring our own ideas into our understanding of the text.

- ? Who are the characters? *God.*
- ? What are the action words (key verbs) in this passage? *Created and hovered.*
- ? Are any phrases or words repeated? *Not in this passage.*
- ? What type of literature is this passage? *History or historical narrative; as we read through the rest of Genesis 1, Moses presents a straightforward account of God's creative acts over a six-day period.*
- ? Are any figures of speech used in the text? *The language is direct, but the phrase "heavens and the earth" is a figure of speech (called a merism) that is used to include everything in the entire universe. Much like we would say "head to toe" to include a whole person, this figure of speech includes all God created.*
- ? What is the historical context of the passage? *This is the very beginning of time—before this, there was no time.*
- ? What is the main point of the passage? *God existed before time and created the universe.*
- ? What does the passage tell us about God? *This passage tells us that God existed before there was time. Many other passages confirm this idea, as we will see later. This affirms that God is eternal and self-existent. It also reveals that God has a Spirit who was involved in the creation.*



Slide #4

- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.



Slide #5

- Encourage your students to take notes in their Student Guides during the lesson.

### Exodus 3:13–15

Let's read Exodus 3:13–15 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? What name does God declare to Moses? *I Am Who I Am, I Am.*



Slides #6–7

 Slides #8-10

- ? **How long has this been God's name?** *It has been his name forever and will continue for all generations.*
- ? **What does God intend to communicate with this name?** *He is the self-existent and eternal God.*

### John 18:1-6

Now let's look at John 18:1-6 to see how it relates to God's existence.

- ? **What is the biblical context of this passage?** *This happens on the night of the last supper with the disciples as Jesus is about to be taken to the cross.*
- ? **Who is present in this scene?** *Jesus, the 11 disciples, Judas Iscariot, and a group of soldiers and officers from the Jewish leaders.*
- ? **What was the goal of the soldiers?** *They intended to arrest Jesus.*
- ? **How did Jesus respond to them approaching?** *He went forward and spoke to them.*
- ? **What fact about Jesus is revealed in verse 4?** *He already knew all that was to happen to him.*
- ? **What attribute of God does this reflect?** *Jesus is omniscient; he knows all things.*
- ? **After asking them whom they were seeking, how did Jesus identify himself?** *He said "I am." Note that most translations, like the ESV, insert the "he" though it is not in the Greek. Ask the students who have a NKJV or NASB how the "he" appears in the text (it is italicized). Other translations will likely have a footnote that indicates the literal reading of the Greek is "I am."*
- ? **How did the soldiers respond to Jesus' statement?** *They fell to the ground.*
- ? **What would explain this response?** *This is likely a response to the authority and power conveyed in Jesus' announcement.*
- ? **What was Jesus claiming by saying "I am"?** *He was claiming to be God, using the same name of God, though in Greek, that God had used to identify himself to Moses. Jesus was claiming to be I AM.*

### Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text to draw out the ideas, let's look for the main point of these verses in light of today's lesson topic.

- ? **What truth about God's existence do we draw from these passages?** *God existed before there was time, and he created the universe. God exists outside of time and created time as part of the universe (Isaiah 57:15). Emphasize the eternity of God as one of his attributes, referring to the Attributes of God poster.*
- ? **What do we learn about the nature of God from these passages?** *Combined, these passages indicate that God is a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We will develop this more in a later lesson.*

God is eternal. He has always existed and is the Creator of everything that exists in the physical and spiritual realms. If he created everything, then he existed before time—he created time. That is something we really can't comprehend since our only experience is one within the bounds of time.

If God did not exist outside of time, he could not be the Creator. Indeed, if God did not exist, we could not exist since there would be no cause for all things. God is the I AM—the one who causes all things to exist and without whom we would not be here talking about him.

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## ***God Doesn't Believe in Atheists***

The opening words of the Bible assume God's existence, and there is really no place in Scripture that tries to present some brilliant philosophical argument for God's existence. We are going to look next at a passage that will help us directly answer the question about how we know God exists.

### **Romans 1:18–23**

 Slides #11–14

Turn to Romans 1 and let's read verses 18–23 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? **How does God act toward unrighteous people?** *He reveals his wrath against them.*
- ? **How do people know that God exists?** *God's existence is evident in his creation.*
- ? **Is God's existence clearly evident or hard to find?** *This passage makes it clear that it is evident, being clearly seen by witnessing the things he has made in the world.*
- ? **Who has made this truth evident?** *God has made it plain to all men.*
- ? **What attributes of God are evident in his creation?** *His eternal power and divine nature are clear from all that he has created.*
- ? **According to verse 18, how do people respond to the knowledge of God's existence?** *They suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*
- ? **Do people have an excuse for not acknowledging God?** *No, they are without excuse for denying God's existence.*
- ? **How does verse 21 confirm that all men know God?** *It clearly states that they know God.*
- ? **What characterizes the behavior of people who deny God's existence?** *They do not honor God or thank him for his creation, and they become futile in their thinking.*

- ❓ **Whom do they worship rather than God?** *They worship created things rather than the Creator. This may include idols (various forms of paganism) or mankind (various forms of humanism).*
- ❓ **Do these God-deniers think they are wise or foolish?** *They believe they are wise, but it is a worldly wisdom that is foolishness in God's eyes and leads to darkened hearts.*

 Slide #15–16

### Psalm 19:1–4

- ❓ **What does Psalm 19:1–4 confirm about Romans 1?** *God's creation declares him as the Creator throughout all of the world.*

### Discover the Truth

Despite the claims of many who deny they believe in God, everyone knows that he exists. The fact is, God doesn't believe in atheists! There are no true atheists, only those who claim to be atheists. These texts make it clear that they know there is a divine Creator, but they suppress the truth of his existence in an attempt to deny his claim as Lord over all. As the Creator, he has the right to direct his creatures to obey him. Because of our sinful nature, our tendency is to rebel against that authority.

As we interact with people in an evangelistic sense, we need to keep in mind that God has made his existence apparent to all people—whether they deny it or not. We don't need to prove his existence to them. In fact, if God did not exist, we would have no foundation for our reasoning, our morals, our sense of the uniformity of nature—no foundation to even think knowledge is possible.

Using any other worldview other than the biblical worldview, there is no firm foundation. Evolutionary worldviews have random chance over billions of years as their foundation. Humanistic worldviews have human reasoning as the foundation. Other religions have multiple gods as their foundation. None of these worldviews can provide a consistent foundation—God alone is that foundation.

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### ***Worldly Wisdom Activity***

 Slides #17–18

For our activity today, I would like you to work with a partner to answer two questions. You will find those questions in your Student Guide. In light of the truths recorded in 1 Corinthians 1:18–31, 1) How is the wisdom of the world described in this passage? 2) Why has God chosen to communicate the gospel in the way he has? Read over the passage and then discuss with a partner the answers to those two questions. *Allow time for students to complete this activity.*

## Connect to the Truth

- ?** What does this passage teach us about the wisdom of the world? *It is nothing compared to God's wisdom; it is foolishness; it will be destroyed by God.*
- ?** Why did God choose to proclaim a gospel message that the world would see as foolish and weak? *He has decreed this to put to shame the arrogant claims of man's wisdom (v. 27), so that no person could boast that his own wisdom had brought him to salvation (v. 29), and so that God alone would receive the glory in the salvation of sinners (v. 31).*
- ?** How do these truths influence the way that we relate to people who deny that God exists? *Rather than coming up with clever arguments and using worldly wisdom to prove that God exists, we should simply proclaim his existence and the message of the gospel so that hearts can be changed by the work of the Holy Spirit.*

## Application

We have seen from several Bible passages that God's existence as the self-sufficient and eternal Creator of the universe is presupposed from the very first verse of the Bible. God has not instructed his followers to spend time presenting physical evidences in an attempt to convince unbelievers of his existence. For example, Romans 10:17 does not say, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through amazing scientific evidences that prove God exists and that the Bible is true." On the contrary, the passage states: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the *word of Christ*." No amount of physical evidence can convert a sinner into a child of God. Thankfully, this responsibility belongs to the Holy Spirit and does not depend on our clever arguments. We are called to proclaim the truths of God's existence and his message of salvation. As Christians, we know that God exists and have the testimony of the Spirit to assure us of that.

- ?** What does Scripture have to say about believers' responsibility for sharing their faith? *Divide the class in half. Have students in one half search for verses that encourage them to use God's Word in all circumstances. Have the other half search for verses that support the idea that God would hold them accountable for "turning someone off" by presenting God's Word to them. Let students search for about 5 to 10 minutes and have them share what they've found.*

 Slides #19–29

There are no passages of Scripture, in the Old or New Testaments, where God truly holds a believer accountable for causing a non-believer to reject his message of salvation when it has been presented in accordance with his Word (1 Peter 3:15). Therefore, we should never be afraid that we will "turn someone off" by showing them God's Word. But this is, perhaps, one of the main reasons Christians are fearful to share their faith. On the other hand, numerous passages encourage believers to

proclaim God's Word to everyone as often as possible. Therefore, we should never be fearful or ashamed to communicate God's Word to any unbeliever.

- ?** **If someone asks you how you know God exists, how would you respond?** *Some students will probably say they would start with the Bible. However, you can expect some, if not many, students to say, "But what if the person will not listen to the Bible?" This is a valid concern, but we must always consider the Bible to be our ultimate authority. If we put evidence before Scripture, the evidence becomes the authority.*
- ?** **What is the proper role of evidence in our apologetics?** *Many Christians feel compelled to use the argument from design; the idea that if we find a complex object, such as a watch, it must have been created by a designer. Others may mention probability arguments concerning the extreme odds against a "simple" cell evolving by chance. While these ideas are compelling to some, they cannot prove God's existence or cause someone to believe in him. They can, however, be used to confirm what the Bible says about God and his creation. This is where many Christians err when attempting to defend their faith. They place too heavy an emphasis on scientific information, and they leave Scripture out of the discussion until a positive response is elicited from the evidence. Or worse, Scripture is left out altogether.*

### **Romans 1:20**

- ?** **Does Romans 1:20 teach us to use physical evidences before Scripture?** *Many Christians mistake this verse to be saying just this. However, upon careful examination it becomes clear from verse 19: "God has shown it to them." This is not a command for you (us) to show it to them. We can point out the design apparent in the universe, but someone who is suppressing the truth of God's existence in unrighteousness will not be immediately swayed.*

### **Psalms 19:1**

- ?** **Does Psalm 19:1 teach us to use physical evidences ("the heavens") before Scripture?** *Again, many mistake this verse to say that God reveals himself to individuals through the beauty of the stars. This is partly true and may very well be what Paul was referring to in Romans 1:20. However, Psalm 19:7 makes it clear that God's Word converts the soul, not the glory of the heavens. This further supports the idea that God's Word must always be included in our apologetics.*
- ?** **Are Christians sometimes more comfortable explaining scientific evidences rather than Scripture when speaking with skeptics about God's existence?** *Have students share their thoughts. The answers will likely reflect their comfort level with using scientific evidences rather than sharing God's Word.*
- ?** **Is an evidence-first approach to evangelism/apologetics ever useful?** *Yes. For example, an unbeliever might start a conversation by saying there are no evidences for the truthfulness of the Bible or for the existence of God. It would be perfectly appropriate to respond by saying you disagree and then give a few supporting evidences. However, it is imperative that God's Word is brought*

into the discussion as quickly as possible. This lets the listener know why you're interpreting the evidences as you are, and allows God's Word to begin working on his heart. And remember, if the listener refuses to hear God's Word, it is not your fault. It is a problem between him and his Creator, and God is faithful to ensure his Word will accomplish his will (Isaiah 55:11). We have to be faithful to give people the only remedy for their sin problem—God's truth, not science.

The following are two confirming evidences for the existence of the biblical God. These can be used to help people see what they may be missing or suppressing and how only the God of the Bible can make sense of what we see in the world around us.

**Information Science:** We can define information as a coded message containing an expected action and intended purpose. We find this kind of information in the DNA in the cells of every living organism, in quantities of almost unimaginable proportions. The theorems of information science demonstrate that creative information *cannot* arise spontaneously in matter by chance process. Information always results from an intelligent source. The discovery of such vast amounts of information in living things supports what we read in the Bible concerning the creative acts of an all-powerful God. God was the intelligence behind the message we find in the DNA of living things. No other explanation can account for this information, so the necessity of God's existence is clear through what he has created.

**Irreducible Complexity:** Many systems found in living organisms are interdependent. For example, in order for our blood to clot when we are injured, a host of chemical reactions must take place in a highly specific order. If any of these parts is missing, the entire process fails. Hemophilia is an example of a disorder where one or more of these interdependent parts are missing or non-functional. Systems such as this pose an enormous problem for molecules-to-man evolution as they require all of their component parts from the very outset or the system cannot function. This complexity is explained only by the Creator we read of in the Bible—the systems were made to function when God created them.

Using such evidences to confirm God's existence is a great way to answer the questions of skeptics. But we have to be careful not to elevate the evidences in nature above the truths of the Bible. If our interpretation of the evidence from nature can prove the Bible is true, then our interpretation becomes the authority over Scripture. That is the difference between thinking in an *evidential* way as opposed to a *presuppositional* way. The Bible should be our ultimate authority—our basic presupposition.

- ? Has any of you ever had a skeptic question why you believe in God?  
Allow students to share their experiences.

- ?** How did you handle his or her questions? Are there things you would like to do differently in light of what we have just discussed? *Allow students to express their frustrations, triumphs, and questions. Use this as an opportunity to apply what's been taught in the lesson to the experiences being shared. Be careful not to single out obvious "mistakes." Your students are new to this material and most likely did not know better. This is a time to train and equip your students for future apologetic situations.*



## Group Prayer Time

*Be sure to pray with your students before you dismiss them.*

- Pray for the ability to retain the information and for opportunities to share what has been learned in class.
- Praise God that he has revealed himself to us and that we can trust him in all things.



# The Trinity

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

## *Lesson Focus*

The Trinity refers to one God in three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Trinity were present at creation.

## *Key Passages*

Genesis 1:1–3; Psalm 33:6; Hebrews 11:3; John 1:1–5; Isaiah 44:23–24; Colossians 1:15–17; Psalm 104:30; Matthew 3:13–17

## *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Identify biblical support for the Trinity.
- Distinguish between the orthodox Christian view of the Trinity and views historically identified as heresies.

## *Memory Verse*

**Psalm 119:89–90** Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

# Lesson Preparation

## *Come On In*

Write on the board, "How would you describe the Trinity using an analogy?"

## *Studying God's Word*

Print one God Is Triune chart for each student.

Print one Trinity Diagram for your use.

Gather the following items:

- Ice cubes  Small saucepan
- Water

For the Trinitarian Heresies Activity, print one Athanasian Creed and one Trinitarian Heresies sheet for each student.

# Optional Supplements

## *Video Clips*

Preview the recommended video(s) before class. If appropriate, show to your class and discuss before, during, or after the lesson.

- Communities (2:07)

## *PowerPoint*

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 4*.

# Prepare to Share

## Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

The word *Trinity* is not found in Scripture, but the concept of the Trinity is clear in its accounts. It is an important doctrine of the Christian faith, advocating that God eternally exists as three persons. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God—but there is only one God. Because of our finite minds, this concept is impossible to fully understand and/or explain. Let's consider a few things.

There is only one God. "I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God" (Isaiah 45:5). See also Isaiah 46:9; Galatians 3:20; 1 Corinthians 8:5–6.

All three persons of the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are called God. In *Christ* all the

fullness of deity dwells bodily (Colossians 2:9). The *Holy Spirit* and *God* are both referred to as God (Acts 5:3–4).

All three persons of the Trinity are eternal. *God* is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2). The throne of *the Son* is forever and ever (Hebrews 1:8). *The Spirit*, too, is eternal (Hebrews 9:14).

All three persons of the Trinity are Creator. Genesis 1:1–3 clearly references that *God* and the *Spirit of God* were present at creation. John 1:1–5 brings *Christ*—the second person of the Trinity—into the picture at creation. He was in the beginning with God, and all things were made through him. Colossians 1:15–17 again confirms that *Jesus Christ* is the firstborn over all of creation. And by him all things were created. This passage also reiterates the eternity of Christ.

## Historical/Apologetics Background

The Bible, while not using the term *Trinity*, plainly teaches that while there is but one true God, he consists of three separate yet equal persons—and all were present at creation. In fact, the term *Trinity* did not become a formal doctrine of the church, by name, until the fourth century. This fact has led to numerous debates over the origin of this word and its validity as a doctrine of Scripture.

Many teachers in the history of Christianity have twisted the concept of the Trinity. To misunderstand the nature and character of God is a serious problem. When this misunderstanding leads to a compromise in the true understanding of the gospel, the mistake can rightly be called a heresy—a doctrine that leads to damnation.

A brief look at some of the historical heresies built around the doctrine of the Trinity follows. In all cases they deny either the oneness of God, the distinction between the persons of the Trinity, or the full deity of one or more persons of the Godhead.

**Modalism:** This idea suggests that God acts in three different "modes" but is only one person. God appeared as the "Father" in the Old Testament, as "Jesus" in the earthly ministry, and as the "Spirit" in the present age. Presently, some Pentecostal groups hold to Modalism.

**Arianism:** Named for the fourth-century teacher Arius, this view teaches that Jesus and the Holy Spirit were created by God the Father. This idea was condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

**Adoptionism:** This view teaches that Jesus was an ordinary man until, at his baptism, he was adopted by the Father and given supernatural powers and the status of "Son of God." Some Unitarians hold this view today.

**Unitarianism:** This view holds that there is a single God with no distinct persons. Whether Jesus or the Father is God varies, but many present-day Unitarians reject the pre-existence of Jesus, insisting that he began to exist at the virgin birth.

Church councils were called to deal with mutations of the truth that were being spread in the early church. As a result, the doctrine of the Trinity was codified in the Nicene Creed in 325, and later in the Athanasian Creed. Both of these creeds are the basis of an orthodox understanding of the relationships within the Trinity.

Even today we see how misunderstanding the Trinity can skew the gospel by denying the biblical understanding of atonement, justice, and the effect of Christ's work on the cross.

We often hear people speak of God: God is good; God will answer our prayers; God is in control; God has a plan. Yet many of these same people seldom speak the name of Jesus Christ—and may not even believe that salvation comes through him alone. They deny and fail to understand the important doctrine of the Trinity—three persons in one God.

These people discount the significance of who Jesus is—that he is 100% fully God and 100% fully man. Specifically, there are many who claim that Jesus Christ was merely a man—a prophet; the first created being; a sinless, good person—but not God in human flesh. The significance of the doctrine of the Trinity eludes them.

And yet, the New Testament is abundantly clear that Jesus is God. Jesus claimed to be one with the Father (John 10:30–33); he used the title of “I AM” from the Old Testament (John 8:23, 8:58); he demonstrated his power over nature, disease, demons, and death (Matthew 8); and he forgave sins—something only God can do (Mark 2:1–11).

Upon seeing the resurrected Christ, Thomas declared, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28), and Jesus did not rebuke him but affirmed him for saying so. And finally, the Jewish leaders recognized Jesus’ claims to deity and tried to stone him for it (John

5:18, 8:59); ultimately they had him crucified for supposed blasphemy.

Why is it important to believe trinitarian doctrine and specifically that Jesus is both God and man? Our very salvation requires it. The death of a mere man (no matter how noble) could not provide the purchase price required to redeem other men from their sins against an infinite God. But because Jesus is God, is eternal, and is infinite, he alone is able to satisfy the penalty for those sins by his death.

In addition, Jesus had to be fully human in order to redeem Adam’s fallen race—the human race. The substitutionary atonement required that Jesus Christ must die as a man to bear judgment for the sins of men. Only the God-man could bridge the gap and bring both God and man together. As a man, he lived a perfect life and is qualified to be our high priest and Savior (Hebrews 2:17, 7:24–28).

Many discussions surround this important doctrine and can cause division in the church. This is a mysterious doctrine that cannot be comprehended by the human mind. We know that God has revealed the primary truths of the Trinity in his Word. With that in mind, we must be willing to allow that there are secret things that belong to the Lord our God, which have not been revealed (Deuteronomy 29:29).



# Studying God's Word

## Introduction

- ? In our last lesson we discussed how we can prove that God exists. Does the Bible try and prove God's existence? *Allow discussion. No, it assumes his existence.*
- ? Do people already know God exists? *Allow discussion. Romans 1 says that God has made his power and eternal nature clear to all men through what has been made. But men suppress this truth.*

We saw that people don't necessarily need fancy proofs of God's existence; they need to hear God's Word—that's what will bring them to faith.

A couple weeks ago, we talked about the attributes of God. Well today, we will examine another attribute of God—one that is very difficult to wrap our minds around.

- Write on the board, "How would you describe the Trinity using an analogy?"



Slides #1–3

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## The Father, the Son, and the Spirit All Created

The idea of the Godhead being three-in-one (triune)—the doctrine of the Trinity—is not directly stated in Scripture, so we are going to look at how the Bible presents this extremely important doctrine. *Consider using this short demonstration below to show how our analogies of the Trinity can actually misrepresent what the Bible teaches on the subject.*

- ? Have you ever heard, or used, the analogy of the three states of water to describe the Trinity to someone? *Show the glass of water, the ice, and the saucepan.*

Since water can exist in three different states at different temperatures (i.e., ice, water, and steam), it seems like a helpful way to illustrate the idea of the Trinity—that God is one, yet three. If I melt this ice, it will become liquid water. If I heat the water in this saucepan or let it sit on the counter, it will turn into a vapor. Yet it is still made up of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, H<sub>2</sub>O. As we continue through this lesson, let's think about that analogy and see if it holds up to the test of what is recorded in Scripture. We'll come back to this analogy later. *The typical explanation of this analogy comes across as the heresy of Modalism, but we'll explain how it can be rightly used later in the lesson.*

- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

- Encourage your students to take notes in their Student Guides during the lesson.

### Genesis 1:1–3

The first passage we are going to look at should be familiar—we used it two weeks ago. Let's read Genesis 1:1–3 together. *Have someone read it aloud.*

We are all very familiar with this passage, but today we are going to look at it from an angle that you may not have considered before. This passage



Slide #4

gives us a glimpse into the Trinity, so let's examine the passage using some of the questions and tools we have been talking about, being careful to draw truths out of the text, not impose our own ideas on the text.

- ? Who are the characters mentioned in the passage? *God and the Spirit of God.*
- ? What actions are ascribed to God and the Spirit? *God created, and the Spirit was hovering.*
- ? When did this take place? *On day one of creation at the beginning of time.*
- ? Who is responsible for creation? *God.*
- ? What does the passage tell us about the nature of God? *God is the Creator, and there is a Spirit of God.*

Remember that connecting various passages on a given topic is a critical part of the inductive Bible study method.

 Slide #5

**Psalm 33:6; Hebrews 11:3**

Genesis 1:1–3 is not the only place that talks about creation. Let's look at three other passages that talk about creation: Psalm 33:6, Hebrews 11:3, and John 1:1–5. *Have someone read Psalm 33:6 and Hebrews 11:3.*

What connection do you see between these verses and Genesis 1:1–3? *In Genesis 1:3, God spoke to create the light. In Psalm 33:6 the heavens were made "by the word of the Lord." And in Hebrews 11:3, we are told that "the universe was created by the word of God"*

 Slides #6–7

**John 1:1–5**

In John 1 we see a similar parallel. *Have someone read John 1:1–5.*

- ? What is the parallel between this passage and Psalm 33:6, Hebrews 11:3, and Genesis 1? *All of these refer to something spoken—the Word, God said, the word of God, and the word of the Lord. Jesus is called the Word of God; he is the Word incarnate. The Word of God in John 1 is the Son of God who took on flesh. Before that, he existed with the Father and the Spirit. In Genesis 1, we can see the presence of the Father directing the work of creation through his Word, the Son, and accomplished by the working of the Spirit.*

**Discover the Truth**

None of these verses has stated that God is a Trinity. But as we look at these verses, it should be clear that three distinct persons are involved in the act of creation—God, the Spirit of God (Holy Spirit), and the Son (Jesus).

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***God Is Three in One***

This next passage we're going to look at presents an interesting idea.

 Slides #8–9

**Isaiah 44:23–24**

Let's read Isaiah 44:23–24 together. *Have someone read the passage.*

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to observe what it is saying to us. This process is an important part of understanding God's Word.

- ? **What type of literature is this passage?** *Poetry.*
- ? **What features mark this passage as poetry?** *The parts of creation described are not actually shouting, singing, etc., as they glorify God for his acts. This is a figure of speech called anthropomorphism where things that are not human are given human attributes. The mountains can't literally sing, but they offer praise to God just as people do. Reading poetry, we must read the passage and consider what the author intended to communicate (authorial intent).*
- ? **What is God being praised for?** *His redemption of Israel and his acts of creation.*
- ? **What has God done according to verse 24?** *He has formed each person in the womb and made all things, stretching out the heavens.*
- ? **Who helped God perform these acts of creation?** *Verse 24 clearly says he was alone.*
- ? **In the previous set of verses, we concluded that three persons were involved in creation. Does this verse contradict our previous conclusion?** *Since we know that God does not and cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), either our previous conclusion was wrong, or another explanation can reconcile these two ideas. It is very clear that both the Word and the Spirit were present with God the Father at creation, so there must be another explanation that will harmonize these two apparently contradictory statements.*
- ? **Who can provide an explanation that reconciles these ideas?** *The concept of the Trinity—that God is one, yet three persons—can reconcile the ideas.*

Let's look at some other verses that describe the creation of various things. Let's look at Colossians 1:15–17 and Psalm 104:30.

### Colossians 1:15–17

- ? **Who is the Creator according to the Colossians passage?** *The pronouns used must be traced back to verse 13, but the reference is to Jesus ("his beloved Son"). Jesus is described as the agent of the creation of all things.*

 Slide #10

### Psalm 104:30

- ? **Who is the Creator of humans according to Psalm 104:30?** *The pronoun "your" must be traced back to verse 24, but the agent of creation is the Spirit of God, just as we saw in Genesis 1.*
- ? **If we look at all of these passages together, what do they tell us about who the Creator is—God the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?** *All three persons are said to have been involved in the acts of creation and in sustaining life on the earth.*

 Slide #11

## Discover the Truth

Although we have not encountered the word *Trinity* anywhere in the Scriptures we have looked at, I hope you can see the picture coming into

focus. God is both one and three, but in different ways so that there is no contradiction. He is one God existing as three distinct persons. The Father is not the Son is not the Spirit, yet they are all the single God described as creating the universe. We have been examining this idea using the role of Creator, but many other roles and descriptions are ascribed to all three members of the Trinity. We might say that God the Father commanded the Son and the Spirit as the agents of creation.

Likewise, we could examine passages that describe the worship of each of the three persons, yet we are to worship only the one true God. We could examine passages that call all three persons eternal and that attribute the resurrection of Jesus to all three persons. The doctrine of the Trinity is one that is constructed by looking at the whole Bible, and comparing Scripture with Scripture. When we do this, the text reveals one Godhead with three distinct persons.

- ❓ Who can think of a passage in Scripture that would help us show that there are indeed three members of the Godhead? *The clearest passage is the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:13–17 (also recorded in Mark 1:9–11 and Luke 3:21–22).*

## ***The Baptism of Jesus***

Let's look at one last passage that shows the Trinity.

### **Matthew 3:13–17**

Let's read Matthew 3:13–17 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

This passage has a lot of implications for how we understand the Trinity, but let's make sure we examine the text to avoid any errors of interpretation.

- ❓ Who are the human characters? *John the Baptist is baptizing Jesus.*
- ❓ How do we see the three persons of the Trinity present in this passage? *The Son was being baptized, the Father was the voice from heaven, and the Spirit appeared in the form of a dove.*
- ❓ Does this passage demonstrate that God exists as a Trinity? *This passage supports only the idea of three persons in the Godhead, not the idea of the Trinity.*
- ❓ How could this passage be misunderstood? *Taken by itself, this passage could be used to support the idea of tritheism—worship of three distinct gods that are not members of one Godhead.*

Other verses speak of all three persons. In John 15:26, Jesus said that he would send the Helper (Holy Spirit) from the Father. Again, this doesn't prove the Trinity, but only shows the personhood of each member of the Godhead.

 Slides #12–13

## Discover the Truth

Now that we have looked at this idea, let's make sure that we understand that no individual verse proves the Trinity, but that when we look at the entire Bible and its teaching, the doctrine of the Trinity emerges as a unifying theme. Many reject this idea and insist that God is a single person (Unitarianism) or that there are multiple gods (polytheism). We'll examine some of these positions in the activity, but here is a quick reference that gives a summary of the passages that support the Trinity. You can keep this in your Bible to refer to in the future.

We are going to look at one of the historical confessions of the Christian faith, the Athanasian Creed. This creed dates from around AD 500, almost 200 years after the Nicene Creed, but is a refined explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity based on the whole counsel of Scripture. This creed is held by the catholic church to be the orthodox confession. Here *catholic* simply means universal, not the Roman Catholic Church, but this confession is used by Catholics and Protestants alike, predating that historical division.

Through the early church, these doctrines, based on the clear teaching of the Bible, were established at various councils and written in creeds. The Athanasian Creed is named for Athanasius of Alexandria, though it was written after his death and was not the product of a formal council. The creed puts the beliefs regarding the Trinity into simple statements that help identify both true and heretical teachings. Heresy is rightly defined as an unbiblical teaching that prevents salvation for those who hold to it—a damnable doctrine. For instance, believing that Jesus was simply a man, not God, is a view condemned as heresy by the Athanasian Creed, which draws that idea from Scripture.

► Pass out the God Is Triune sheets for the students to keep in their Bibles for future reference.

► Note: We include and read the Athanasian Creed to show that the early church had a developed and clear view of the Trinity. They viewed this as a cardinal doctrine. Encourage students to compare any creed or statement with the full counsel of God's Word.

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## ***Trinitarian Heresies Activity***

*Pass out the Trinitarian Heresies worksheet. The students will be completing a short summary of some of the more common trinitarian heresies. Have the students read over the Athanasian Creed and then find passages from Scripture that support the statements from the creed. Also have the students identify any modern groups that hold these heretical views.*

To help us identify ways that the concept of the Trinity has been distorted, we are going to use the Athanasian Creed and Scripture to evaluate these heresies. On the worksheet you will find a short summary of these ideas that are contrary to the Bible's teaching and are outside orthodox Christianity.

Your job is to identify the statements from the Athanasian Creed that counter these ideas and then find Scripture references that support the creed's claims. Then, if you are aware of any modern holders of these

views, note those. We will come back together in a few minutes to compare our lists and share Scripture references and other information you have found. After an appropriate amount of time, bring the class back together and help everyone fill in any information they missed. You will find suggested answers on the Teacher Guide page of the worksheet.

## Connect to the Truth

God has called us to worship him in truth. If we are not worshipping God as he has revealed himself in the Bible, we are not honoring him. Groups and teachers who teach ideas contrary to the Bible's revealed truth lead people into error and will face great judgment from God. We must study Scripture carefully so that we do not fall into the same errors. Knowing what heretical ideas have already been rejected by those who have come before us can save us much time and effort in countering errors.

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## Application

We started this lesson with an analogy of the Trinity. We spoke of the Trinity in terms of ice, water, and steam.

- ? Who can identify the potential error in this analogy? *This is dangerously close to the idea of Modalism since, as presented, the ice must melt to form water and then become vapor—all three cannot be present at one time. This must be very carefully explained so that the analogy does not lead anyone astray.*

Just like any analogy, there is a weakness in this explanation. Since we are trying to explain an infinite God with a finite analogy using finite language, we are going to fall short. However, analogies can be useful; we just have to be careful in how we present them. Those of you who are scientifically minded might know that there is a condition in which ice, water, and steam can be present at the same time in the same container. This is called the triple point and is possible at a specific temperature and pressure (0.01°C and 0.006037 atmospheres of pressure). If you explain these conditions, water becomes a reasonable analogy for the Trinity but one that requires a technical explanation.

Other popular analogies are the clover (three leaves yet one clover), space (three dimensions), and time (past, present, and future). All of these are appropriate if used carefully, but all have obvious limitations in trying to explain the triune nature of God and can lead to heretical understandings of God's nature.

Let's summarize what we have learned today by reviewing three key concepts that present the case for the triune nature of God. We will put them in a diagram to help us remember the relationships the Bible presents within the Trinity.

 Slide #14

- **Premise 1:** There is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:23–24, 46:9).
- **Premise 2:** The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all identified in Scripture as God (Galatians 1:1; John 1:1; Acts 5:3–4).
- **Premise 3:** These three each relate to one another and to the world as distinct persons (Matthew 3:13–17; John 15:26).
- **Conclusion:** The one true God of the Bible has revealed himself to exist in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We can diagram these relationships in the following way: *Using the Trinity Diagram, explain that the Father is not the Son is not the Holy Spirit and that each is God—one yet three.*

When you engage people in conversations about the gospel, you are likely to face questions about the Trinity as you speak of the Father whose wrath abides on sinners, the work of Christ in his obedient life and death on the cross, and the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. An understanding of the Trinity will help you become a more effective witness. You can also use this understanding to praise God for the way he works through each person of the Trinity to accomplish his will and bring glory to himself, especially in providing a way for sinful man to be reconciled to a holy God.

 Slides #15–18

- ? **Why is it important to have a proper understanding of the Trinity?** *To rightly worship and serve God, we must understand who he is in truth. There is much danger in denying the Trinity as the doctrinal beliefs of denying the Trinity lead to denying the deity of Jesus and other serious errors that Scripture warns us against.*
- ? **The Athanasian Creed includes this statement: “He therefore that will be saved must think thus of the Trinity.” Why did the drafters of this creed believe this was such an important doctrine, and do you agree?** *As this creed was being developed, there were many groups trying to overthrow the truth of Scripture, so these strongly worded statements were necessary to draw lines of Christian orthodox teaching based on the Bible and not on man’s ideas. 1 John 2:20–25 makes it clear that to have a proper understanding of the Father and the Son is essential to salvation and the hope of eternal life.*
- ? **When you consider the Trinity, what is the most difficult aspect for you to understand?** *Discuss various answers, encouraging the students to deal seriously with any doubts they have*
- ? **How does understanding the Trinity affect your view of God?** *There are many complications that could be discussed, including knowing that the Trinity works together in all things to accomplish God’s will. There is fellowship within the Trinity just as there is fellowship between God and man. There is a hierarchy in the Trinity just as we relate to others within the body who rule over us (e.g., parents over children, elders over members).*



## Group Prayer Time

*Be sure to pray with your students before you dismiss them.*

- Praise God for his majesty revealed in the Trinity.
- Ask God for grace to know him better.
- Thank God for his Word which reveals him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



# God's Word Guides Us

*The Bible is God's Word, and we must study it carefully.*

## *Lesson Focus*

The Bible is God's Word. We study it by observing the text and asking Who? What? When? Where? Why? The Bible is good for doctrine—teaching God's truths; Reproof—showing us our sin; Correction—learning to turn from sin and do what is right; and Instruction in righteousness—learning how to please God.

## *Key Passages*

2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:13–18

## *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Describe the roles of God and men in writing the Bible.
- Distinguish among the four ways God's Word guides us.

## *Memory Verse*

**2 Timothy 3:16–17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

# Lesson Preparation



## *Come On In*

As students come into the classroom, write on the board, "Is anything impossible for God?"



## *Studying God's Word*

For the Impossible for God? Activity, print the activity from the Teacher Digital Resources.

# Optional Supplements

## *Video Clips*

Preview the recommended video(s) before class. If appropriate, show to your class and discuss before, during, or after the lesson.

- Tolerance and the Bible (4:04)

## *PowerPoint*

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 5*.

# Prepare to Share

## Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

God has revealed himself to us in the words of the Bible—his only written revelation to man. We are called to study diligently what has been revealed and apply it to the way we live our lives. Within the pages of Scripture, we find many exhortations to use what God has revealed in a way that honors him. We also know that as we trust in the Lord with all our heart, and do not lean on our own understanding, he will direct our steps through the wisdom of his Holy Word (Proverbs 3:5–6).

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul stated, “All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is the inspired (“breathed out”) Word of God, transmitted not by the will of man, but through holy men of God as they were directed by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20–21). These men, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote without error all that God instructed. It is the only inerrant, infallible Word of God, and we can trust it to guide us in all things.

How does it guide us? Paul tells us that it is useful for doctrine—teaching Christian truth;

## Historical/Apologetics Background

Many people chide Christians for reading the Bible literally. The Bible contains many different types of literature, but all of them communicate God’s truth to us. When we say we take the Bible literally, we really mean that we take it in the sense that it was written. Some sections of Scripture are meant to be read as historical accounts, while others are poetic.

The process of understanding what Scripture says is called *hermeneutics*—the process of trying to understand what the Bible means. Learning proper hermeneutics opens a whole new world of truth found in the Bible. There are many different schools of biblical interpretation. These range from liberal approaches (mystical interpretation, naturalistic interpretation, etc.) to the more conservative approach we’ll be using (where ideas are considered in context and Scripture is used to interpret Scripture). This second, more conservative method may

reproof—telling us when we are wrong; correction—showing us how to correct our wrong actions; and training in righteousness—teaching us how to obey God (2 Timothy 3:16–17). These are the general guidelines—they are expounded on again and again throughout the Bible.

God has spoken to reveal his plan for history, his purpose for mankind, and his will for us. More than 2,000 times the Old Testament states, “Thus says the Lord,” or something similar, claiming that God himself is the author. In the New Testament we observe that Jesus preached the Word of God (Luke 5:1), the early church preached the Word of God (Acts 4:31), the Word of God was preached to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1), and Paul preached the Word of God throughout all of his missionary journeys (Acts 13:5, 18:11, 19:10).

The Word of God is living and active (Hebrews 4:12), given to us by God himself—to teach us the principles of our faith, to reveal our sin, to show us how to deal with sin, to instruct us how to live in a manner that pleases him, and ultimately, to reveal to us how we can be redeemed into everlasting life through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

be new to you. It is often referred to as the grammatical-historical method of interpretation because it takes into account the grammar and context of the passage as well as the historical and cultural setting of the author and the original hearers. We will call it the inductive Bible study method.

As we seek to understand what God has said, we should not import our own ideas into Scripture but rather allow Scripture to inform and evaluate our ideas. Drawing ideas out of the text is called *exegesis* (*ex-* meaning “out of”), while adding our ideas into the text is called *eisegesis* (*eis-* meaning “into”).

Take Genesis 1 for example. If we simply read that chapter as it is plainly written, we would conclude that God created the universe in six normal days—an accurate exegesis. On the other hand, if we consider that same text by starting with a belief in evolutionary processes occurring over millions of years, we might be tempted instead to interpret those “days” as

long ages. In that case, we would engage in eisegesis since we imported the idea of long ages into the text—a practice which can lead to the dangers of compromise and distorted conclusions.

In order to properly exegete a passage, we include three essential components in an inductive Bible study: observation, interpretation, and application. These steps can be subdivided in various ways, but we will stick to three basic parts to teach the process.

To **observe**, we simply ask *who, what, when, where, why, and how* questions about the study passage. For example, who is the author writing to? What words are repeated or emphasized in the passage? When was this written? Where is the event taking place? What type of literature is being used (history, poetry, parable, etc.)? What is the main point of the passage?

By taking time to observe the text, we become familiar with the important words, commands, and main themes that are present. Once we are familiar with the passage, we are ready to interpret what we have read.

To **interpret**, we look at the passage in light of what the rest of the Bible has to say on the same topic. We may identify cross-references, cultural considerations, specific word meanings, context, commentaries, or parallel passages that tell of the

same account or provide the same idea. We should be careful during the interpretation stage because there is always the danger of trying to read our own ideas into the text.

After we have observed what the text says and interpreted the key ideas, the next step is to **apply** the Word to daily life. Scripture is full of God's commands to believers to apply what he has communicated—we are to be doers of the Word, not just hearers (James 1:21–24).

Ultimately, Scripture is to be the source of truth in our lives. Evangelical tradition is built on the belief that every Christian can read and understand God's Word. The fancy term for this idea is the *perspicuity of Scripture*. The Reformers fought to make the Bible available in the language of the people so all could personally read, study, and learn from it. This was highly condemned at the time, and many lost their lives in the process of defending the truth that God's Word is for everyone.

Having the Word of God so available is a privilege that many in the world still do not have. As Christians we should be grateful for our Bibles and take advantage of its availability, while being diligent to read, study, and handle the Word carefully as we use it to direct our lives and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.



# Studying God's Word

## Introduction

- ? Last week we talked about the Trinity using a method of studying the Bible known as inductive Bible study. Can anyone tell me the three basic steps we talked about? *It involves observing, interpreting, and applying the text.*

We will be using this method to look at the Bible passages we will be studying throughout this curriculum, so if you don't have it down quite yet, we will continue to practice it.

- ? Why is the Trinity such an important doctrine for us as Christians? *Rightly understanding who God is lays the foundation for our belief in him and our worship of him. If we do not rightly understand the Trinity and apply that knowledge, we run the great risk of not understanding salvation properly. As we saw in 1 John 2:23, if we do not have true fellowship with the Son we do not have fellowship with the Father. The Trinity is a key doctrine that will help us rightly understand God's works revealed in Scripture.*

We also talked about the doctrine of the Trinity last week. We saw from Scripture that God is One God, yet three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

 Slides #1–3

- As students come into the classroom, write on the board, “Is anything impossible for God?”

 Slide #4

 Slide #5

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## Scripture Came from God

Today our focus is going to shift to the character of the Bible as God's revelation of himself to us.

We are going to look at several questions: where the Bible came from, how it came to us, and what it is useful for. We will examine several passages of Scripture that will help us answer these questions and assure us of God's goodness in revealing himself to us in the pages of the Bible.

### 2 Peter 1:19–21

Let's read 2 Peter 1:19–21 together to answer the question of where the Bible came from. *Assign someone to read the passage.*

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to observe what it is saying, looking for any ideas that may need to be interpreted. Looking back in this epistle (a letter to a certain audience), we know that the author is the Apostle Peter and that he is writing to his fellow Christians (1:1–4). For context, this epistle is filled with encouragement for a people who were being persecuted by governments and religious leaders and threatened by false teachings. Peter is explaining how he has personally seen Christ, has a desire for the purity of the message he is proclaiming, and wants this message to be preserved for their benefit (1:15–18). Not only that, but Peter clearly describes where the Bible came from—one of the questions we are trying to answer today.

- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

 Slides #6–7

- Encourage your students to take notes in their Student Guides during the lesson.

 Slide #8

- ? Who is the “we” in verse 19? *This refers to all believers, referring back to his audience in verse 1.*
- ? What does Peter call the readers to “pay attention to” in the passage? *The prophetic word*  
The prophetic word has been confirmed in the events of Christ’s life and death— the events Peter witnessed.
- ? What is this prophetic word compared to? *It is like a light shining in the darkness*

### Psalm 119:105

- ? How does Psalm 119:105 relate to this passage from Peter? *The psalmist calls God’s Word a lamp and a light to guide one’s life.*
- ? What word or idea do you see repeated in this passage? *Prophecy is repeated three times.*
- ? Knowing that this was an audience in the first century, to what would they equate the references to prophecy? *They would have understood this as a reference to the Old Testament writings.*
- ? Who are the men who “spoke from God” Peter refers to? *They are prophets from the Old Testament who recorded God’s words.*
- ? What does the word “prophecy” mean? *Many may mistakenly believe that prophecy is telling of future events, but it has a much broader meaning of speaking on behalf of God.*
- ? Verse 20 starts with the phrase “knowing this first of all.” Is this intended to be a reference of the message’s order? *Not necessarily timing, but a reference to its importance. The NIV translates this phrase as “above all.” “First” can have the sense of timing or of rank. Here it is best interpreted as rank—the most important thing to know.*
- ? In verses 20 and 21, two qualities of the prophecies are given that are not true. What are those two qualities? *The prophets did not record their personal ideas about God (private interpretations), and the prophecies were not from their own human will.*
- ? Were men involved in the writing of Scripture? *Yes, according to verse 21.*
- ? Was God involved in the writing of Scripture? *Yes, according to verse 21.*
- ? What does the passage tell us about the Holy Spirit? *The Holy Spirit was actively involved in the delivery of the prophecies that were spoken and recorded.*

### Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text and interpreted a few of the phrases and words, let’s talk about the main ideas that are communicated. We are trying to answer the question of where the ideas in the Bible came from, and this passage should give us a great starting point to understand the answer.

- ❓ If the Holy Spirit was the Bible's author, would we expect it to contain errors of any sort? *Since the Holy Spirit is God and God is perfect, the original proclamations and writings would have had no errors.*
- ❓ How does this passage answer the question about the source of Scripture? *It gives us two sources: holy men and God the Holy Spirit.*
- ❓ How could we summarize the main point of this passage in a simple phrase? *Scripture is not simply a product of man, but given to us by God through men.*

If we think about the Bible in its full scope, it was written by some 40 different authors over a period of roughly 1,600 years. Yet, it contains a consistent message that progressively reveals the truths God has for us and points to the only way of salvation—Jesus and his finished work on the cross. This confirms that this book is indeed the Word of God.

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## ***Impossible for God? Activity***

*The students will be looking at two passages that teach it is impossible for God to lie. Many people think God can do anything, but they really haven't thought this issue through. God cannot do anything that is inconsistent with his character. They will also see that in any line of reasoning, there must be an absolute standard. Since God has given us the Bible and God cannot lie, what is contained in the Bible must be true.*

 Slide #9

People often say that you can't use the Bible to prove the Bible. But, that's what we just did! We looked inside the Bible for confirmation that the Bible is true. Many would say that this is circular reasoning. I want us to look at two passages of Scripture to help us decide if that is really the case. Take a few minutes to fill out this worksheet in small groups, and we will come back and talk about it in about five minutes. *Pass out the worksheets and have the students work in small groups to complete them.*

### **Connect to the Truth**

Now that we have gone through the questions on the worksheet, let's talk about what we found.

- ❓ Why is it reasonable for God to swear by himself when we would not accept the same from any of us? *Because God is the ultimate standard, he can swear by nothing greater than himself. Man is not greater than God, so man often swears by God or something greater than himself to confirm the sincerity of a pledge.*

Any time we reason, we make claims based on information that has various sources. If I asked you how you know Venus is a planet, you might say because it is called a planet in an encyclopedia. But how do you know the encyclopedia is correct? Ultimately, we must come to a final authority in determining truth. The Bible should be that standard in everyone's life—it is the very Word of God. That is why it is not

unreasonable to use the Bible to support the Bible. We can appeal to no higher standard. Everything that the Bible affirms is truth.

- ? It is often said that God can do anything, but we must be careful with that claim. What impossibility did you find in the passages we looked at? *It is impossible for God to lie.*

It is impossible for God to do anything that is inconsistent with his character. God cannot lie, and we can trust what he has revealed to us. If he could lie, he would cease to be God. This should give us great comfort as we use the Bible to guide our lives.

We must be careful with this argument: “The Bible is true because it says it is true.” If we stop there, we would be making a vicious circular argument. We need to add another component. The Bible is the Word of God because it says it is *and* it allows us to make sense of the world. No other system of thought (worldview) provides a consistent, rational explanation for our world. The Bible is true because it says it is, and any other explanation for the universe’s existence is illogical in some sense.

This concept may be new to many of you. This form of reasoning is called presuppositional apologetics. It is a bit different from the approach most Christians use where they use evidence to build up a case. If you’re a bit confused, don’t worry; we will explore these ideas as we move forward with the lessons.

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## ***God’s Word Is Profitable***

There is another passage of Scripture that many of you may have been thinking about at various points in this lesson. It affirms that God is the author of Scripture and gives us more detail about how we can use Scripture in our lives.

### **2 Timothy 3:16–17**

Let’s read 2 Timothy 3:16–17 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

I think you can see how this passage parallels what we have been talking about so far.

- ? What is the main subject of this passage? *Scripture.*
- ? What is the source of Scripture according to this passage? *God.*
- ? The ESV uses the phrase “breathed out by God” to describe the transmission from God to man. How do other translations describe this? *KJV and NKJ: inspiration of God; NIV: God-breathed; NASB: inspired by God.*
- ? What is Scripture profitable for? *Teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (other versions will use slightly different words).*

 Slide #10

- ❓ From verse 17, what is the goal of inspired Scripture? *Scripture makes every child of God complete—equipped for every good work.*
- ❓ How does this passage connect to the 2 Peter passage we looked at earlier? *Both identify the source of Scripture as God.*
- ❓ What promise do we find in this passage? *We can be complete and equipped by studying and applying Scripture.*
- ❓ What does the passage tell us about God? *He is the source of Scripture.*

## Discover the Truth

There are two ideas from this text that we are going to examine more closely. Thinking back to our previous lessons, we have talked about a three-step process for understanding Scripture—observe, interpret, and apply. We have just made observations about the passage, and now we are going to interpret the ideas to understand them better. Then, we will be able to apply these truths to our lives.

- ❓ The Greek word that is translated “breathed out by God” is a very important part of understanding the source of Scripture. Does anyone know what that Greek word is? *Theopneustos; theo=God, pneustos=breathed out.*
- ❓ That word literally means “breathed out by God,” so Paul is reminding Timothy that Scripture comes directly from God. Some translations say that the Bible is “inspired.” What does that mean? *Allow discussion.*
- ❓ People often talk of works of art or music as being inspired. Is this the same sense we use when talking about the inspiration of Scripture? *No. Artistic inspiration is generally understood to come from within the person. Prophetic inspiration comes from God, who cannot lie and cannot contain anything impure. We might better think of Scripture as expired—coming out of God himself. It is not the writer of Scripture who is inspired, but the original writings (autographs) that are inspired. Technically speaking, it is more accurate to say that the Bible is inspired, not its authors.*

 Slide #11

Understanding that God used the prophets to breathe out his words onto the scrolls they were writing on and through the words they proclaimed, Paul moves on to the usefulness of those words and truths. He tells us that every person who is in Christ (the man of God) may be complete through using Scripture to shape his thinking and actions. This is supported by Paul in Romans 8:28–30 when he tells us that we are to be conformed to the image of Christ—the very definition of completeness. *(Stop and read this passage if time allows.)* Our sanctification, growing in holiness, is bound to our understanding and application of Scripture as well as the Holy Spirit’s work in us.

So, as we seek to apply the truths of Scripture, we have four distinct ways to accomplish that: doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. These four ideas can provide us with a clear way to look

 Slide #12

at a section of Scripture and understand how to apply it to our lives—the third step in our Bible study process (hermeneutics).

Let’s briefly examine each of these four words to understand the distinctions. The first is teaching. Other translations use the term *doctrine*.

Doctrine is the body of truth laid out in the Old and New Testaments. The understanding of doctrine has become quite unfashionable in the majority of churches, but doctrine is what helps us understand the difference between true and false ideas. If we do not have a grasp on doctrinal truths from Scripture, we will be unable to recognize the false ideas masquerading as truth. The lack of doctrine has led to compromise within the professing church: marrying evolution to the Bible, the profaning of marriage, homosexual clergy, etc.

- ❓ The second is reproof. What is meant by reproofing or rebuking someone? *This means to point out a sinful attitude, action, or thought pattern that is not in line with the truths of Scripture.*
- ❓ Is it possible to reprove someone in the absence of doctrine? *No, there must be a standard of action to be compared to. Right action can come only from right thinking (orthopraxy comes from orthodoxy).*

The third term is correction. Pointing out an error is of little use to someone unless the goal is to make a correction. If we are driving from Alabama toward Canada and you notice the compass in the car says south, you can rebuke me for driving in the wrong direction, but it does neither of us any good in getting to Canada unless you help me correct my mistake. This is one of the important parts of being part of a body of believers in a local church. If someone is off course, we can help correct them. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

The final idea is training in righteousness. As we mentioned before, the goal of our Christian life is to be conformed to the image of Christ. Scripture provides us instruction for growing in righteousness. The Bible contains positive examples and commands of behavior and thought. Just like we train children by giving them positive examples to follow, Scripture gives us the same—that we “may grow up in all things into him who is the head—Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). The life-changing truths we find in Scripture are evidence that supports the claim that the Bible is from God.

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## ***Application***

So let’s think about the issues we have talked about so far today and try to solidify them in our minds.

- ❓ What is the ultimate source of Scripture and what passages can we use to support this idea? *All Scripture is from God: 2 Peter 1:19–21 and 2 Timothy 3:16.*
- ❓ How were the Scriptures delivered to us? *Through men/prophets guided by the Holy Spirit.*
- ❓ Why can we trust the Scriptures? *They are given by God, and God cannot lie.*
- ❓ According to 2 Timothy 3:16–17, in what four areas is the Bible useful? *Teaching (doctrine), reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.*

None of this head knowledge matters if we don't intentionally put it into practice. We can observe and interpret the text, but we cannot be conformed into Christ's image if we don't apply it to our lives, cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

 Slides #13–15

- ❓ It is likely that you know people who doubt the truth of the Bible. They might say things like, “We can't trust the Bible; it was simply written by men.” How would you go about discussing this idea with them? *Hopefully, the students will talk about using Scripture to explain the origin of the Bible to a skeptic. However, many have been trained to pile up evidences and leave the truths of Scripture out of the discussion. The next question may be helpful to draw out this idea.*
- ❓ Is it wise to leave the Bible out of the discussion about the authority of the Bible? *No, it is the only source of truth that we can ultimately appeal to. Setting the Bible aside is like a soldier setting his weapon aside when entering battle.*

We can use evidence in many valuable ways to support the claims of the Bible, but we can never have the attitude that piles of evidence can prove that the Bible is true. If the evidence proves the Bible, then the evidence becomes the ultimate standard, not the Bible. If you have never thought about demonstrating truths in the Bible that way, I would encourage you to pray and meditate on that this week.

- ❓ As we look to apply the four uses of Scripture we discussed, let's think about your personal devotion time or family Scripture reading. How could you put these four guiding principles into practice? *After reading a passage and understanding the main ideas, ask yourself, or your family, the following questions: What fundamental teachings have I learned (doctrine)? Where do I fall short of any commands given in the passage (reproof)? What can I do about my errors (correction)? What steps can I take or imitate from the passage in order to make this teaching a consistent part of my life (instruction in righteousness)?*

All of these are practical ways that we can put the ideas from the text we have studied into practice. I sincerely hope that this has energized you to think about God's Word as the absolute standard we should look to in our lives. It promises that we can be complete by studying it and applying it to our lives—and we can trust that promise because it comes from the God who cannot lie.



## Group Prayer Time

*Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.*

- Praise God for his faithfulness.
- Ask for understanding of the passages and how to put them into practice.
- Thank God for giving us his Word and for guiding us into all truth.



# God Preserves His Word

*God will always preserve his Word.*

## *Lesson Focus*

God has protected his Word for thousands of years. It will endure forever—through all generations.

## *Key Passages*

Luke 24:13–32; Jeremiah 36:1–4, 36:17–32

## *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Describe how Jesus affirms the authority of the Old Testament.
- Provide an example of the miraculous preservation of God's Word.

## *Memory Verse*

**2 Timothy 3:16–17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

# Lesson Preparation

## *Come On In*

Write on the board, "If you could travel back in time, at what one event in biblical history would you want to be present?"

## *Studying God's Word*

For the How God Speaks Activity, Students will make a cross-reference in their Bibles from 2 Peter 1:19–21 to Jeremiah 36:1–4, 36:27–32.

# Optional Supplements

## *Video Clips*

Preview the recommended video(s) before class. If appropriate, show to your class and discuss before, during, or after the lesson.

- The Bible Through History (12:24)
- The Canon (9:44)
- Unity of the Bible (2:21)

## *PowerPoint*

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 6*.

# Prepare to Share

## Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

The Old Testament begins God's Word—the history of the universe. It contains 39 books and tells us about ancient Israel and God's promise of the Messiah. God has been careful to preserve his Word since the beginning of time.

One dramatic biblical example of God preserving his Word begins in 2 Chronicles 34 during King Josiah's reign over Judah near the beginning of the seventh century BC. Josiah began a period of reformation in Judah. The people before him had completely turned away from God. But Josiah did what was right in the sight of the Lord and walked in his ways (2 Chronicles 34:2).

The house of the Lord had been desecrated, and Josiah commanded that it be repaired (2 Chronicles 34:8). It was during this restoration of the temple that Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses (2 Chronicles 34:14). When Josiah heard the Word of the Lord read, he was convicted of the idolatry and sin in the land, and he tore his clothes in repentance (2 Chronicles 34:19). Because of Josiah's tender heart and humble spirit, God's judgment was withheld from Judah for the time being (2 Chronicles 34:27–28).

## Historical/Apologetics Background

You may encounter people who don't necessarily believe the Old Testament can be trusted, or they feel that it is insignificant to today's culture. But we know that it is relevant and true. God has taken great strides to preserve it through many tumultuous times and thousands of years.

Not only that, but he has been gracious to leave historical evidence that confirms the authenticity of the Scriptures. We know that the ancient Hebrews relied on Scripture. They recognized the inspiration of certain texts and depended on them for wisdom.

The five books of Moses, beginning with Genesis, were written around 1500 BC and chronicle the history of the earth over the previous 2,500 years. After that, the remaining books were written by prophets and scribes. These holy men of

However, when Josiah's son Jehoiakim became king, the people once again turned their backs on God and his Word. This is when the Word of the Lord came to the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:1), and he was instructed by the Lord to write the words of judgment against Israel, Judah, and all the nations (Jeremiah 36:2). Jeremiah dictated God's Word as Baruch wrote the scroll (Jeremiah 36:4). When the scroll was finished and read to King Jehoiakim, he was not afraid, repentant, or humble before the Lord as his father had been (Jeremiah 36:24). Instead, Jehoiakim cast the scroll into the fire piece by piece as it was being read (Jeremiah 36:22–23).

But was King Jehoiakim able to destroy God's Word even with fire? No. God will always preserve his Word and did so then. He called Jeremiah again and instructed that another scroll be written. Jeremiah took the scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe who wrote on it. It contained all the words (and more) of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire (Jeremiah 36:32).

God has always been and will always be faithful to preserve his Word. In the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8). And in the words of the psalmist, "The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever" (Psalm 119:160).

God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19–21). The words were recorded on scrolls and carefully transmitted through the generations with painstaking diligence to ensure their accuracy. The final record from the Old Testament prophets came at the hand of Malachi. His prophecy of the coming Messiah (Malachi 3–4) begins a period of 400 years of silence before John the Baptist proclaimed the arrival of Christ.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered at Qumran in 1947, gave rise to additional confirmation of these ancient texts. This finding presented Old Testament manuscripts dated as early as 150 BC. These manuscripts were written nearly 1,000 years before other manuscripts already discovered, and they proved to be the same as those previously found.

For example, a copy of the book of Isaiah was part of the findings at Qumran dated about 150 BC. Prior to this, the oldest dated manuscript of the book of Isaiah was around AD 980. Yet when these two copies of Isaiah were compared, they were found to be 95 percent accurate to the Hebrew Bible—even though they were written over 1,000 years apart.

This evidence of ancient Old Testament Hebrew texts together with the astounding number—more than 24,000—of partial and complete manuscript copies of the New Testament gives us solid historical background to the reliability of the Bible. Biblical scholars have agreed that the number of manuscripts supporting the Bible provides unparalleled authentication of the original documents. In fact, the Bible has more documentation to verify it than any other book of antiquity that is commonly accepted.

In addition to the historical, physical manuscripts and longevity of the Scriptures, we find more confirmation of the Old Testament truth through Jesus Christ himself. Our Lord relied on the truth and promises of the Old Testament. Indeed, Jesus placed such a high value on the inspired Word of God that even he—the very Son of God, the Messiah—will-

ingly submitted himself to its authority while on earth. He relied on it to resist the temptations of Satan (Matthew 4), and he read from it when he taught in the synagogues. In fact, he was reading from the Old Testament book of Isaiah when he proclaimed that he was the Messiah who fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (Luke 4:16–21).

Then later, after his resurrection from the grave, on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13), Jesus admonished his companions to believe what the prophets of old had written (Luke 24:25). And as they walked, Jesus taught them from the Scriptures, beginning at the writings of Moses and all through the Prophets, the things concerning himself—that he was the one sent to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21). Jesus Christ taught, obeyed, and lived the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

Because Jesus held these testimonies in such high regard, we should as well—never forgetting that God speaks to us through the consistently preserved Scriptures so that we can know him, his character, his purpose, and his plan to redeem a people for himself for all eternity.



# Studying God's Word

## Introduction

Last week we answered the questions of from where and how we got the Bible. Understanding the basic arguments for the inspiration of Scripture is a very important part of sharing our faith with others and answering sincere skeptics' questions. Not to mention, it is a great encouragement to our own faith.

- ❓ What two passages from Scripture give us a solid understanding of how we came to have the Bible? *2 Timothy 3:16–17 and 2 Peter 1:19–21.*
- ❓ What is the basic description of the Bible's origin based on these two passages? *God, through the Holy Spirit, moved his prophets to record his words. The recorded words are inspired Scripture—breathed out by God for our benefit.*

 Slides #1–3

- Write on the board, “If you could travel back in time, at what one event in biblical history would you want to be present?”

 Slides #4–7

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## On the Road to Emmaus

Today's lesson will help us understand the writing of the Old Testament canon and how Jesus affirms its authority. Some of you might be confused by the word *canon*, so let's clear that up right now. The word comes from the Greek and Hebrew words for a reed used as a measuring rule. So when we talk of the canon of Scripture, we are talking about the books of the Bible that act as a rule or guide for our lives, not about using the Bible as a weapon.

### Luke 24:13–32

To begin looking at our topic today, let's open our Bibles and read Luke 24:13–32 together. *Divide the passage for members of the class to read aloud.*

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to observe what it is saying to us.

- ❓ Who are the characters in this passage? *The characters are two of the disciples of Christ (not apostles)—one named Cleopas, the other unnamed—and the risen Christ.*
- ❓ Where did this take place? *On a road from Jerusalem to Emmaus and in a house in Emmaus.*
- ❓ When did this happen? *It happened on the Sunday that Jesus rose from the dead.*
- ❓ Did the disciples recognize Jesus? *No, their eyes were restrained from knowing who he was.*
- ❓ What was the attitude of the disciples as Jesus approached them? *They were sad, according to verse 17.*
- ❓ What were the disciples hoping for (verse 21)? *They were hoping that Jesus was going to redeem Israel. This was probably a hope for Christ to rescue Israel*

- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

 Slides #8–15

- Encourage your students to take notes in their Student Guides during the lesson.

from Roman occupation—a hope that could not be fulfilled if Christ had died and his body was missing. They may have had their minds fixed on an earthly kingdom rather than a heavenly one.

- ? **What was Christ’s response to their despair?** *He rebuked them for not understanding what was taking place in light of Scripture.*
- ? **Are there any figures of speech used in the text?** *Verse 27 uses “Moses and all the Prophets” as an idiom for the Old Testament Scriptures.*
- ? **What is the main point of the passage?** *Jesus showed the two disciples how the Scriptures testified of his life, death, and resurrection. He was correcting their thinking using the Scriptures as the authority.*

## Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let’s talk about the main idea and try to rightly interpret some of the elements we looked at.

- ? Verse 27 says that “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets” Christ explained things concerning himself. **How should we understand what Jesus meant?** *This phrase is a figure of speech indicating that Christ used the text of the Old Testament, called the Scriptures later in the verse, to explain the ideas. It is called a merism and is quite common in our language. For example, we often say we searched high and low to mean that we searched everywhere. We often use the phrase “From Genesis to Revelation” to talk about all of Scripture.*
- ? **Why is this a fitting figure of speech for the Old Testament Scriptures?** *Genesis is the first book of the Bible and was written by Moses. “Beginning with Moses” indicates that Jesus started from the beginning, likely with Genesis 3:15 in the first shadowy proclamation of the gospel where the Seed who will crush Satan is promised. So, “Moses” refers to the five books of Moses. “The Prophets” would be the closing part of the Jewish canon, so everything from Moses to the Prophets contains the whole of Scripture at that time. This would also include the psalms and wisdom books like Proverbs found between.*

In the Gospels, Jesus often refers to the Law and the Prophets (e.g., Matthew 5:17). The Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, are commonly referred to as the books of the Law by the Jews, so his hearers would have easily understood what he was speaking of. Also, if we look forward to verse 44 of Luke 24, Jesus adds the psalms when explaining that he has fulfilled the prophecies contained in Scripture regarding the Messiah.

What we know as the Old Testament, the first 39 books of the Bible from Genesis to Malachi, records 3,600 years of history from the creation up to the intertestamental period when there were no prophets in Israel. Moses wrote the Pentateuch around 1500 BC and Malachi was written around 400 BC. This set of writings was, and still is, considered the Jewish Scriptures. These are the books that Christ and all of his disciples would have studied in order to understand God and his relationship to mankind. *Refer to the Seven C’s Timeline to show the period during which the Old Testament canon was recorded.*

- ? Jesus often used the phrase, “Have you not read?” (e.g., Matthew 12:3; 19:4; 22:31) or some variation when talking to the religious leaders who challenged him. How does this relate to the topic we are discussing? *Jesus constantly referred to the Scriptures as the authority for understanding what God expected from mankind. We would be wise to follow his example.*

As Jesus walked alongside these two disciples, he took them back through the Scriptures and explained how he was present in the Old Testament writings. He was the Word at creation (John 1 and Genesis 1). He was the promised Messiah who would crush the head of the serpent, that is, Satan (Genesis 3:15). He was the Rock that was broken to give streams of living water to the Israelites in the desert (1 Corinthians 10:4 and Exodus 17:5–7). He was the bruised, beaten, and crucified Savior (Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53). He was the sun of righteousness who would come to bring healing (Malachi 4:2–3). In this passage, he strongly affirmed that the Old Testament contains these truths about him, and many more.

Would it not have been an amazing experience to have those very things explained to you by Christ himself? *Connect back to the opening question on the board.*

## ***God’s Word Is Recorded***

The next passage we are going to look at will give us an example of the way God has delivered and preserved his Word through history. To give some background on this passage, during the reign of King Josiah, Judah was called back to worshipping God. One of the priests found the Book of the Law in the temple, and it was read before the king. Josiah desired to follow God’s commands and instructed the people to do the same (2 Chronicles 34). His sons who ruled after him turned away from God. His son Jehoiakim became king while Jeremiah was still a prophet in Judah, the southern kingdom. That is where we pick up the account. *Refer to the Seven C’s Timeline to show the time frame of these events, around 600 BC.*

### **Jeremiah 36:1–4, 36:17–19**

 Slides #16–18

Let’s read Jeremiah 36:1–4 and 36:17–19 together. *Divide the passage for members of the class to read aloud. After the first reading, tell the students that the section from verse 5 to 16 describes how Baruch went out and read the scroll to the people who were in Jerusalem and finally to the princes in Jehoiakim’s court.*

- ? What type of literature is this passage? *Historical narrative.*
- ? When did this happen? *The fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim.*
- ? Where did this take place? *In Jerusalem.*
- ? Who was instructed to write God’s words? *Jeremiah (vv. 1–2).*
- ? Who actually wrote on the scroll? *Jeremiah’s scribe, Baruch (v. 4).*

- ? **How did this process work?** *Verses 17 and 18 describe how God spoke through Jeremiah to Baruch as Baruch wrote the words on the scroll.*
- ? **What message did Jeremiah proclaim?** *God was going to judge Israel and Judah, and God was calling them to repentance.*
- ? **What role was Jeremiah fulfilling?** *He was acting as a prophet, proclaiming the words of God.*
- ? **What advice did the princes give to Baruch?** *The princes advised him to take Jeremiah and hide.*

### **Discover the Truth**

We know the message that Jeremiah was bringing was one of judgment unless the people of Judah repented of their sin. Baruch was simply the messenger delivering the scroll of judgment.

- ? **Why did the princes advise Baruch and Jeremiah to go into hiding?** *They likely believed that Jehoiakim would want to bring harm to the messengers.*
- ? **How does the description of the recording of God’s words compare to the 2 Peter 1:19–21 passage we looked at last week.** *Jeremiah is the man who spoke from God as the Holy Spirit carried him along to speak God’s words as Baruch recorded them.*

## **God’s Word Is Preserved**

The next part of the passage gives us Jehoiakim’s reaction to the message once it was delivered by the princes. Was the advice to go into hiding good counsel?

 Slides #19–27

### **Jeremiah 36:20–32**

Let’s read Jeremiah 36:20–26. *Have someone read the passage.*

- ? **Who does the pronoun “they” refer to in verse 20?** *The princes who heard Baruch read the prophecy.*
- ? **What did the princes do with the scroll?** *They hid it in a scribe’s chamber.*
- ? **What did they do with the message on the scroll?** *They told the king what it said.*
- ? **What did Jehoiakim order once he heard the message?** *He ordered the scroll to be brought and read to all.*
- ? **What was the king’s reaction upon hearing the scroll read?** *He would cut off the scroll after every three or four columns were read, and then throw them in the fire (v. 23).*
- ? **Was the scroll destroyed?** *Yes, it was “consumed in the fire.”*
- ? **What was the response of those in the court?** *Three men implored him not to burn the scroll, but the king and his house did not fear sinning against God (v. 24).*

- ? What command did the king give regarding Jeremiah and Baruch? *He commanded them to be seized.*
- ? How were God’s messengers protected? *We don’t know exactly how, but God protected them by hiding them.*

## Discover the Truth

So we see King Jehoiakim and his court having great disdain for the commands of God. This is not an uncommon reaction to a call to repentance delivered from the prophets. Other examples, however, show God’s call to repentance taking effect in the hearts of men—Jonah preaching in Nineveh, for example.

- ? Did Jehoiakim really think that these were the words of God and that burning the scroll would destroy God’s words? Peek down to verse 29 to see what he was thinking. *He obviously did not think that God could destroy his kingdom. He was truly arrogant and foolish, thinking that he knew better than God.*

God would not allow his words to be destroyed. This passage concludes in verses 27–32 with Baruch rewriting the words God had given through Jeremiah. *You may want to read verses 27 and 32 to describe this command to write a new scroll.*

God has supernaturally preserved his Word throughout history, and this is one prime example. The scribes who transmitted the Old Testament Scriptures took great care to copy exactly what the prophets had written out of a reverence for God—exactly the opposite attitude that Jehoiakim had.

Another interesting nugget from this passage demonstrates God’s omniscience. In verse 29 we are given the thoughts of Jehoiakim regarding God’s call to repentance—something only an all-knowing God could have revealed to Jeremiah.

An evidence of this miraculous preservation of Scripture was found in 1947 in the caves near Qumran, Israel, near the north end of the Dead Sea. In this cave were found many ancient manuscripts of the Old Testament dating as far back as 150 BC. When compared to much later manuscripts, the sets were virtually identical. You likely know these as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Many skeptics would claim that we can’t know that the Bible contains what the prophets actually heard from God. They may suggest that the transmission of the Bible must have been corrupted over time. They use the analogy of the game “telephone,” where a message is passed through whispers along a chain of people and “John ran to catch his plane” comes out at the other end as “Jaw Iran toucans are plain.” This idea, however, is patently false when it comes to the Scriptures. The message wasn’t passed through whispers, but by a careful system of copying the text. The accuracy of this process is confirmed in comparing the manuscripts that were written 1,000 years apart. This confirms the truth

 Slide #28

that the Bible has been supernaturally preserved by God, as we saw demonstrated in the book of Jeremiah.

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## ***How God Speaks Activity***

*Have the students make a cross-reference in their Bibles from 2 Peter 1:19–21 to Jeremiah 36:1–4, 36:27–32.*

- ? If you were to open your Bible to show someone, a new believer or a skeptic, how we got the Old Testament writings, where would you go?

Let's take a few minutes to make a cross-reference between the Jeremiah 36 passages and 2 Peter 1:19–21. You might write the heading "Examples" next to the 2 Peter passage and the Jeremiah reference after that; specifically verses 1–4 and 17–32.

If your Bible doesn't already have a cross-reference between 2 Peter 1:19–21 and 2 Timothy 3:16–17, you can also add that.

### **Connect to the Truth**

Knowing where we can turn in the Bible to support the various doctrines we rely on is a great evangelistic tool. Rather than simply saying, "The Bible says . . ." we can open to the passage and read it, or have someone else read it, and let God's words speak. Having some "go-to" verses on various topics where you note cross-references is a very valuable asset as you study the Scriptures for yourself and seek to explain them to others.

I would encourage you to look into this idea and find more examples of how God used the prophets to record and proclaim his decrees. Mark these under the *Examples* heading you just created by the 2 Peter reference. Then, you will have a place in your Bible where you can turn when you are asked to support and explain where this precious book came from.

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## ***Application***

We have covered three basic points today, so let's stop and think about what we have learned.

- ? What is the approximate date of the writing of what we know as the Old Testament? *Genesis and the other books of Moses were written about 1500 BC and Malachi about 400 BC. Job may have been written earlier, but there is no clear date of its writing.*
- ? What can we learn from the way Jesus referred to the Old Testament? *Jesus constantly referred to the Scriptures as his authority and where others should look for theirs. Specifically, he showed the two disciples on the road to*

*Emmaus how he was present throughout the Old Testament. If Jesus trusted the Old Testament as a source of authority, we must too.*

- ?** **How has God preserved the text of the Old Testament?** *In the Jeremiah passage there is a specific case of rewriting a scroll that had been burned. Many other passages of Scripture could be shown that support the preservation of what God had written. Another example is the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which confirms the accuracy of the transmission of the recorded words of God.*

Now that we have looked at the text of two passages and completed our observation and interpretation steps, let's think about how we can put this information into practice in our lives.

 Slides #29–32

- ?** **What new idea or information did you see in the passage discussing the encounter between the risen Jesus and his disciples along the road that gives you a clearer picture of the Old Testament's importance?** *Discuss various responses that will likely include surprise from some that there was so much in the Old Testament about Jesus.*
- ?** **How has what we talked about today encouraged you? What things can you meditate on or praise God for as you think about these things?** *Seeing how God has specifically preserved his Word should provide great comfort and confidence in the Bibles we have been studying from.*
- ?** **As you share your faith, you are likely to encounter people who doubt the truthfulness of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Some will refer to the Bible as a collection of myths written by desert goat herders. If you knew you had only one chance to share the truth with them, would you open the Bible and show them specific passages or tell them about the Dead Sea Scrolls?** *Many would tend to turn to the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls rather than the evidence within God's Word. Try to persuade the students that it is much more God-honoring to use his Word than to use secondary evidences. This is confirmed in the account of the rich man and Lazarus when Abraham tells the rich man that even if someone came back from the dead his brothers would not believe since they already had the testimony of "Moses and the Prophets" (Luke 16:19–31). If the opportunity arises to confirm the accuracy of Scripture's truthfulness, the various manuscript evidences can be brought in, but the Word of God should be our first evidence.*
- ?** **What questions has this topic raised in your mind, and how might you go about answering those questions?** *Answers will vary, but remind the students that the Answers in Genesis website provides a wealth of information. There is an entire section devoted to the Bible and its accuracy. Also remind the students to confront their doubts by seeking truth from God's Word and leaning into Christ, not pushing away.*

Next week, we will continue in this same thread but will focus on the New Testament. I hope you are learning much as we continue through this study.



## Group Prayer Time

*Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.*

- Praise God for preserving his Word.
- Ask God that each person would have boldness to share the hope of Christ with others.
- Thank God for his justice and mercy toward sin.



# God's Word Is Complete

*All of God's written Word is complete.*

## *Lesson Focus*

We know the New Testament is God's Word and that it is true. We realize that the Bible—both the Old and New Testaments—is the complete, written Word of God.

## *Key Passages*

John 14:25–26, 21:24–25; Revelation 22:18–19; Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Proverbs 30:6

## *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Describe the role of the Holy Spirit in writing the New Testament.
- Identify the approximate date of the closing of the canon.

## *Memory Verse*

**2 Timothy 3:16–17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

# Lesson Preparation

## *Come On In*

Write on the board, "Why are there exactly 27 books in the New Testament?" This will allow the students to start thinking about the topic of the lesson.

## *Studying God's Word*

For the A Common Thread Activity, print the activity from the Teacher Digital Resources.

# Optional Supplements

## *Video Clips*

Preview the recommended video(s) before class. If appropriate, show to your class and discuss before, during, or after the lesson.

- Books of the New Testament (10:41)

## *PowerPoint*

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 7*.

# Prepare to Share

## Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

The Old Testament closed with a warning of judgment (Malachi 2:2) and the promise of a Messiah (Malachi 4:2). And then waiting. Four hundred years of silence from God . . . until the fulfillment of the greatest event in history—the coming of the Messiah.

The New Testament—reflecting the fulfillment of the promised Messiah through Jesus Christ—was written primarily by the apostles. In John 14:26 we find that Jesus empowered the apostles through the Holy Spirit to recall, write, and interpret his life, words, and deeds. Jesus said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” Jesus again promised his apostles a special revelation of truth through the Holy Spirit in John 16:13: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

The Apostle John verifies himself as an eyewitness to the events he wrote about: “This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and

## Historical/Apologetics Background

In his divine providence, God, not man, has determined through the Holy Spirit the books that make up the Bible. The early church, shortly after Christ’s death and resurrection, had no discussion about what made a book equal to the Old Testament Scriptures. It was universally accepted that if a letter came from Peter or Paul, it was deemed Scripture.

However, it wasn’t long before people began to add their own letters, thoughts, ideas, and gospels—desiring to fill in the gaps with what they believed should be included. Because of this, during the first 200 years of church history, certain questions were adopted to serve as the litmus test for the books added to the Bible. Those questions are:

- Was the book or letter written by an apostle or under the direction of an apostle?

who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true” (John 21:24). And God officially warns against tampering with Scripture—admonishing that no words be added to or taken from this sacred book (Revelation 22:18–19). We can be confident that the writings of those empowered by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are inspired, inerrant, and infallible.

As the New Testament letters began to be gathered and read throughout the church, we find evidence that they were already being included as part of the Old Testament canon and described as “Scripture.” The Apostle Peter makes such a claim about Paul’s writings in 2 Peter 3:15–16 when he puts Paul’s epistles in the same category as the “other Scriptures.”

We can rest assured that the New Testament canon has now completed the Word of God. We are reminded of this truth through biblical, historical, and archaeological findings. Not only that, we know it is God’s Word because as we read it, we hear God’s voice throughout every book—and as children of God we never tire of it. It is the Word of our Creator God—revealing the divine power that grants us everything needed to live a life of godliness through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (2 Peter 1:3).

- Did the writing resound with the truth of God? Did it speak with the voice of authority as the Word of God and not the words of men?
- Were these writings used from the earliest of times? Attempts to include other writings from much later dates have been made. They have been rejected because the material is too new to have been apostolic.
- Did most churches accept these writings as the New Testament canon? Before the middle of the first century, 20 of the 27 books of the New Testament were universally accepted. And only a few churches questioned the other books.
- Did the writings conform to what the church taught? Because there was general agreement as to what the Christian message actually was, this question ruled out false teachings attempting to taint the truth.

All of the books of the Bible regarded as Scripture have been examined according to these questions, and have proven to be the Word of God. Yet still today we see that people attack the authenticity and reliability of the Scriptures. The Bible is increasingly regarded as irrelevant due to the apathy of our culture toward things of God and especially his Word. Consequently, we hear very little about the history of the Bible. As we take a quick look at the books of the New Testament below, remember that these books stood the test based on the questions mentioned above as they were included in the canon of the New Testament.

- The Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John provide accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection during his three-year ministry. Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written between AD 55 and 68; John was probably written in the 90s.
- The book of Acts provides an account of the history of the early church and the spread of Christianity after Christ's resurrection. Acts was written by Luke in the mid-60s.
- The Pauline epistles—Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1

& 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon are 13 pastoral letters written by Paul as he endeavored to grow Christ's church in truth and sound doctrine. These letters were written between AD 51 and 65.

- The General epistles—Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, and Jude are letters written to believers by five different people. They include doctrinal and practical advice and were sent out to churches. These letters were written from the late-40s (James' letter) to the 90s (John's letters).

Most of the New Testament books were added to the Old Testament Scriptures by the early church and were considered the complete inspired canon around 150 AD—this is called the Muratorian Canon. However, due to false teachers and further attempts to change this compilation, other councils—general meetings of the Christian church—met to eliminate any confusion and bring unity to the church. The Council of Carthage in 397 finally affirmed publicly that the 66 books we have today were the divinely inspired Word of God—not to be added to or taken away from (Proverbs 30:5–6; Revelation 22:18–19).



# Studying God's Word

## Introduction

Last week we talked about how the Old Testament canon came to us.

- ?** Who can recap how Jesus used the Old Testament Scriptures on the road to Emmaus with the two disciples? *He showed them how he was present throughout the Old Testament, looking to it as an authoritative source.*
- ?** How did the account we read in Jeremiah confirm what we learned about “holy men of God” recording God’s words? *Jeremiah spoke the words he heard from God while Baruch actually wrote with ink on the scroll. This aligns nicely with the 2 Peter 1:19–21 verses.*
- ?** What two evidences for the preservation of Scripture did we discuss? *Even though Jehoiakim burned the scroll with the prophecy from Jeremiah, it was recorded again, along with many other words, and we have that record today. Also, the Dead Sea Scrolls give great confirmation of the accuracy of the transmission of the Old Testament text.*

- Write on the board, “Why are there exactly 27 books in the New Testament?”



Slides #1–3



Slides #4–6

## The Holy Spirit Will Teach You

Today we will be discussing the collection of writings we know as the New Testament. A testament is a written record of a testimony. The old covenants God made were written by those prophets in the Old Testament, and the new covenant in Jesus and its implications were written by the apostles and others in the New Testament. We will build on the foundation we have been laying over the past two weeks. The same truths about the inspiration of the texts recorded by the Old Testament writers apply to the New Testament, as well. We will see the connection in the first passage we will examine.

### John 14:25–26

Let’s read John 14:25–26 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Now that we have read the text, let’s take some time to observe what it is saying to us. This process is an important part of understanding what God’s Word is telling us.

- ?** Where and when did this take place? *In the upper room during the last supper; you must look back to the opening of John 13 to see the setting which does not change until 14:31 when they depart for the garden of Gethsemane. This puts the timing near the end of Christ’s earthly ministry.*
- ?** Who are the characters? *Jesus is speaking to the 11 disciples—Judas Iscariot being absent (Judas left in 13:30–31).*

- Don’t forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.
- Encourage your students to take notes in their Student Guides during the lesson.



Slide #7

- ❓ **What type of literature is this?** *This is in a Gospel, so it is a narrative account of the words Jesus spoke, in this case to his disciples.*
- ❓ **Are there any figures of speech in the text?** *No, the passage is very direct.*
- ❓ **What does the passage tell us about the Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit?** *Jesus assures the disciples that the Holy Spirit will be sent by the Father in the name of the Son.*
- ❓ **What other name identifies the Holy Spirit in this passage?** *The Helper.*
- ❓ **What specific role is the Holy Spirit responsible for?** *Once Christ is gone, the Spirit will be responsible for bringing to remembrance the words of Christ and teaching the apostles.*
- ❓ **What event is anticipated by “while I am still with you”?** *Jesus talks about his departure, referring first to his death and his ascension to the Father. This is a form of foreshadowing and is made clearer in verse 28.*
- ❓ **What is the main point of the passage?** *The Holy Spirit is responsible for teaching and reminding the apostles of the truth they will need in the future.*

### **Discover the Truth**

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let’s tie those ideas to the origin of the New Testament as part of interpreting the passage.

- ❓ **What impact does this passage have on our understanding of how the New Testament authors produced their writings?** *The Holy Spirit brought to remembrance the experiences they were writing about and taught them things they did not know. These words were then recorded in the writers’ original autographs (manuscripts). Under divine direction, they recorded the inspired words revealed to them by God the Holy Spirit.*

There is a bit of debate about exactly when each New Testament book was written, but there is general agreement. Most would say that the writings were complete, with the exception of Revelation and John’s Epistles, before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. (Some argue that all of the books were written before the temple was destroyed.) The earliest books were written 10 to 30 years after Christ’s Ascension. This has led many critics to claim that there must be many errors in the writings.

- ❓ **If you tried to write an account of something that happened 10 years ago, would you get all of the details correct?** *Probably not.*
- ❓ **So what makes these writings, which are describing historical events, different from what one of us would write?** *Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these authors recorded the events accurately. God superintended the writing of these books for a record to be passed on to the church in the future.*

## ***A Common Thread Activity***

*Pass out the A Common Thread worksheet. Have the students examine the passages on the worksheet, filling in the columns with the appropriate information. Direct the discussion with the questions that follow.*



Slides #8–9

To help illustrate the next point in our lesson, I want you to break into small groups and complete a worksheet. Read over a few of the passages and see if you can identify a theme. Then fill in the key phrases from each passage that connect these passages together. *Have the students break into groups and complete the activity. Give them at least 10 minutes to complete the task before discussing the questions below. If you are short on time, have them look up a few of the passages.*

### **Connect to the Truth**

- ?** After looking over all of these passages, what is the common thread that is woven throughout? *The people recording the events were eyewitnesses to the events.*
- ?** How can this be combined with the truth from John 14:25–26 to make a powerful argument for the authority of the New Testament? *Having experienced the events they were to later record, the writers were then taught and guided by the Holy Spirit to accurately record their experiences and other events.*

### **John 21:24–25**

Let me read John 21:24–25 to you. It is printed at the bottom of your worksheet. *Read the passage.*

The Apostle John affirms that he, along with the other apostles, witnessed these events and is accurately presenting the accounts. These eyewitness testimonies, whose writing was guided by the Holy Spirit, are the foundation for the teachings found throughout the New Testament. They only represent a fraction of the events in the life and ministry of Christ, but they authoritatively demonstrate Christ’s work on earth.

## ***Don’t Add or Take Away***

Our third point for today concerns the question I had on the board as you came in: Why do we have exactly 27 books in the New Testament?

### **Revelation 22:18–19**

Let’s read Revelation 22:18–19 as we begin to address the question. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*



Slide #10

- ?** Who is the author? *The Apostle John.*
- ?** Who is the audience? *Everyone who reads the words.*

- ? What are the two commands in this passage? *Not to add or take away from the prophecies in the book.*
- ? What are the consequences described for violating the commands? *The plagues described in the book will be placed upon the individual, and God will take away their share in the tree of life and the holy city.*

*NOTE: Some of your students may use the King James Version or the New King James Version. Instead of “tree of life,” those versions say that God will “take away his part from the Book of Life.” While this reading is not supported by any ancient Greek manuscripts, the idea is the same—there are eternal consequences for changing God’s Word.*

- ? Are there other passages in Scripture that relate to this passage? *Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32, and Proverbs 30:6 contain the same idea. Ask students to look in their margin notes or footnotes to identify cross-references provided by the publisher. You will read these in a moment.*
- ? What is the biblical and historical context of the passage? *Biblically, this is the last book in the Bible. Historically, this book was likely written around AD 90 when John was the last surviving apostle and all of the other books of the Bible had been written.*
- ? What is the main point of the passage? *Don’t add to or take away from God’s words.*

### Discover the Truth

From this passage we see a clear warning against adding to or taking away from the words of God. We said that the warning in verse 18 specifically applies to this writing, but is it proper to extend this warning to the entirety of Scripture?

- ? Is this a verse that supports the closing of the canon (remember that the canon is the list of books included in the Bible)? *These are a few rhetorical questions to get the class thinking.*

### Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Proverbs 30:6

- ? We mentioned several other verses that echo this idea. Let’s read them now. *Have someone read Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32, and Proverbs 30:6.*

These are passages that come near the beginning, middle, and end of Scripture. Some (the Mormons, for example) say that this is proof that the canon is *not* closed, and that we continue to receive revelation from God. However, these warnings should give us pause when considering this idea. By connecting several ideas together, we can build a case for the close of the canon at the end of the first century. When we say “the canon was closed,” we mean that all of the books that belong in the Bible were complete at the time of John’s writing of these closing words of Revelation.

We identified the book of Revelation as the final writing, both historically and biblically, in the Bible. Because this is the last book in the Bible and written by the last living apostle, it is reasonable to suggest that this

 Slides #11–13

warning, in the last section of Scripture, should rightly apply to all of Scripture. However, we must be careful not to stretch the context too far.

So, let's look at how the early church viewed the apostles' writings to see if we can confirm our conjecture that the canon was closed with the book of Revelation.

- ?** Were the books included in the New Testament put there because they were authoritative, or are they authoritative because they were included in the canon? *Accept a few responses to see where the thinking is. We understand that the books were included because of their authority, but this may not be the common understanding.*

It is commonly claimed by skeptics that the books were chosen to be included because they fit with the teachings of the people in power at the time. They would suggest that many other books were not included because they conflicted with the ideas the powerful or elite wanted to promote. However, this is a straw man argument—it doesn't accurately represent the Christian view. The real reason that the other writings were set aside is because they were not authoritative.

Now for a short history lesson. The early church used five basic criteria to determine which writings should be included.

 Slides #14-15

1. Was the book or letter written by an apostle or under the direction of an apostle?
2. Did the writing resound with the truth of God? Did it speak with the voice of authority as the Word of God and not the words of men?
3. Were these writings used from the earliest of times?
4. Did most churches accept these writings as the New Testament canon?
5. Did the writings conform to what the church taught?

Before the middle of the first century, 20 of the 27 books of the New Testament were universally accepted as authoritative, and only a few churches questioned the other books. It was unnecessary to list the books that were authoritative because it was commonly agreed upon. It was only when false teachers began adding their own writings and editing the inspired writings to their own liking, that a list was needed. One of these false teachers was Marcion (pronounced mar-shun). He denied many fundamental teachings and rewrote the Gospels and Paul's letters to fit his teachings. As he became popular, the church had to respond. Through writings against these heresies, the early church fathers and councils began to formalize the canon that was already practically endorsed.

- ?** Does anyone know the time period when we can identify a list of the New Testament books? *The oldest complete list is known as the Muratorian canon and is dated at AD 150. This list of 22 books seems to be in response to Marcion's attacks on Scripture.*

Although there were a few disputed books, when we look at lists of books that were used by early church fathers such as Origen, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Tertullian, Clement, and others, we see that the set of 27 books we have today was their authoritative source in matters of doctrine and practice.

Contrary to the popular claims that Constantine decided what would be in the canon at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, written confirmation of the 27 books came from the Synod of Hippo in AD 393 and by the Council of Carthage in 397. The affirmation of these books demonstrates the authority that they already possessed as the inspired texts recorded by these holy men of God under the direction of the Holy Spirit. They did not *become* Scripture at these meetings; they already had that distinction.

As we survey the big picture, the New Testament canon was complete with the writing of Revelation sometime around AD 90 (or as early as AD 70). Although some in the early church challenged this finality, we can be confident that those books we now have in the canon are there because they are authoritative records of what God chose to reveal to us, not because some church fathers said they belonged. God used men to record the truths witnessed by many, and we have that as the New Testament today. If we can trust God to provide us a written record, we can trust him to clearly identify that record—both under the direction of the Holy Spirit working in believers.

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## ***Application***

We have covered three basic points today, but we have barely scratched the surface in telling how the New Testament came to be. Entire books have been written on this topic, and I hope this may spark some of you to look into this further. Let's recap the ideas and then discuss some ways to apply what we have learned. Next week we will continue with this same idea, but we'll look at some modern attempts to add to the Bible.

- ❓ **How was the Holy Spirit involved in the recording of the New Testament?**  
*He taught and brought to remembrance all those things God willed to record through these men, and guided the recognition and preservation of those writings.*
- ❓ **What common thread do we see with all of the New Testament writers?**  
*They were all recording eyewitness accounts. All of the writers were apostles of Christ or recording on behalf of apostles (e.g., Luke wrote alongside Paul). All were producing their inspired writings under the direction of the Holy Spirit.*

 Slides #16–20

One of the most common arguments against the Bible is to claim that it was written and assembled hundreds of years after Christ and the apostles were alive. In fact, most of the books were written before AD 70, and all were completed by AD 90 at the latest. This puts them all within 60 years of Christ's death.

- ?** It is commonly claimed that the Bible was compiled by the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 by influential people, especially the Roman Emperor Constantine. How would you respond to such claims? *This is a commonly perpetuated myth, but this council dealt mainly with the Arian heresy regarding the deity of Christ. There is no record that canonicity was discussed at this council. The Muratorian Canon had been compiled more than 150 years before this. It is important to remember to correct people's mistakes in a loving way. In 1 Peter 3:15, we are instructed to give an answer for the hope we have with "meekness and fear." It might also be appropriate to ask the person who made this claim how they know it to be true. If they say they read it in a book, it would be appropriate to ask on what authority they trust that book or its author. This will demonstrate that they are just believing what someone has told them, which is the very charge they may be making against you for trusting the Bible and God as its author.*
- ?** How do we respond to claims that the New Testament was written hundreds of years after the lives of the apostles? *Since we have quotes from the various letters and books and a list of those books within 100 years after the death of the apostles, this is a claim based on faulty information. There are also manuscripts of parts of the Bible that date to earlier than this time, so these claims are not based on real evidence.*
- ?** How does what we have discussed today challenge ideas that you may have had about the New Testament? *Discuss any misconceptions and encourage anyone with more questions to research them further. The Answers in Genesis website has many resources that can answer these types of questions.*
- ?** What about today's lesson gives you encouragement or assurance about your faith? *Allow for answers.*
- ?** What questions have been raised by this lesson? What will you do (or what can I help you with) to answer these questions? *Allow for discussion.*



## Group Prayer Time

*Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.*

- Praise God for giving us a revelation of himself and the life of Christ.
- Ask God to open up truths in his Word as the students study through the week.
- Thank God for truth and wisdom as the students share what they are learning with friends and coworkers.





# Don't Change God's Word

*The Bible is the only inspired revelation from God.*

## *Lesson Focus*

The Bible is the only inspired revelation from God. It must be the absolute authority. Many have tried and will continue to try to change God's Word and teach lies. We must beware of false teachers and false religions.

## *Key Passages*

Deuteronomy 18:17–22; John 12:44–50; Revelation 22:18–19

## *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Differentiate between those who speak for God and those who are false prophets.
- Provide examples of religions that have added to or taken away from the Bible.

## *Memory Verse*

**2 Timothy 3:16–17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

# Lesson Preparation

## *Come On In*

Write on the board, "How do you know whether or not the *Book of Mormon* is a revelation from God?"

## *Studying God's Word*

For the A Different Gospel Activity, print the activity from the Teacher Digital Resources.

# Optional Supplements

## *PowerPoint*

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 8*.

# Prepare to Share

## Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

The serpent in the garden of Eden asked Eve, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). Just as Satan cast doubt on God’s Word in the very beginning, the Word of God has been questioned, denied, changed, added to, and misinterpreted throughout history.

We are called to search the Scriptures to discover the truth—to be Bereans (Acts 17:10–11). Our confidence and trust must be in God’s Word as our final

authority. The Word of God makes it clear that Scripture is what should be guiding us. Deuteronomy provides several warnings against adding to or taking from the Word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32), as well as a test for false prophets who presume to speak in God’s name (Deuteronomy 18:20–22).

A similar warning, given in Galatians 1:6–9, says that those who preach a false gospel will be accursed. Finally, in the Bible’s final chapter (Revelation 22:18–19), we are given God’s assurance that it is complete and that it must not be changed in any way.

## Historical/Apologetics Background

Tolerance—it’s a word we often hear in this culture. The attitude today is to be open-minded, accept everyone, be careful not to offend anyone, and accept all religions as equally true. If it works for you—it works! This is not an accurate understanding of tolerance, but a twisted view that comes from the post-modern mindset where people can construct their own truth. Real tolerance involves understanding the positions of others, knowing why you disagree, living alongside them, and confronting their false ideas with biblical truth.

As Christians, we are called to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who was not tolerant of false religions but stood on the truth of God’s Word (John 3:34, 14:6, 17:3).

Is the Bible the only Word of God? Be assured, God’s Word needs no proof. God begins with the presumption that he exists (Genesis 1:1) and follows up with many texts that authenticate his Word (Proverbs 30:5; Psalm 119:160; John 17:17). He does, however, warn us against succumbing to empty deceit, traditions of men, and the principles of the world that are not of Christ (Colossians 2:8).

We need to be very aware that there are many false teachings in the world today. And only God’s Word provides us with the information needed to discern them from the truth. The Bible is the only Word of God. With this in mind, let’s take a look at how some false religions blatantly deny the truth of God and the work of Jesus Christ.

	<b>Bible</b>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Mormonism</b>	<b>Jehovah's Witnesses</b>
<b>View of Origins</b>	God created all things in six 24-hour days about 6,000 years ago. All creatures, including man, were created after their own kinds. Sin, disease, sickness, and death were not part of this creation; they came as a result of the fall.	The Koran teaches that Allah created all things, but it contradicts itself on the number of days. It also teaches that the first man and woman were created in Paradise but were later banished to earth after the fall into sin.	God created man physically after he created the earth. However, we had a pre-earth life, in which we existed as God's "spirit children."	The Watchtower Society teaches that each of the six creative days of God in Genesis 1 was 7,000 years long, and that the universe is billions of years old.
<b>View of Christ</b>	Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, who became man to live a perfect life, to be mankind's substitute on the cross, and to rise from the dead, defeating death.	Allah (God) created Jesus and appointed him to be a messenger to the Jewish people. The Koran does teach that Jesus was sinless, but he was not God and he did not die on the cross.	Jesus is the spirit-brother to every man, and even Satan. Jesus is one of an endless number of gods and is a being separate from the Heavenly Father.	Jesus is the Son of God but is a created being. Christ existed in a pre-human state as the Archangel Michael. Jesus died at his crucifixion and was resurrected as an invisible, non-material, glorious spirit creature.
<b>Sin and Salvation</b>	Every person has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ and his redeeming work on the cross.	Salvation is possible after adherence to the Koran, as well as performing the five pillars of the Islamic faith. But even then, salvation is not guaranteed.	Sin was part of God's plan because without it mankind could not progress to become like God, know joy, or have children. Salvation is a combination of faith and works.	Human nature is universally sinful because all humans inherit the original sin of Adam and Eve. Salvation comes by placing faith in Christ's sacrifice, being baptized as a Witness, and doing good works.
<b>Life After Death</b>	Mankind will live forever either in heaven or in hell. The only way for us to get to heaven is through faith in Christ.	Allah sends both righteous and unrighteous to hell unless they die in a holy war. But if their good works outweigh their bad, they should be admitted into Paradise. Paradise is only guaranteed to those who die in jihad (holy war).	Even after death, everyone has an opportunity to respond to the gospel. Heaven has three levels, and those who attain the highest level become gods, ruling and populating their own world.	There is no eternal hell; this is a false concept created by Satan to turn people away from belief in Jehovah. Unbelievers cease to exist at death (annihilation), while believers remain in death until the resurrection. Only 144,000 will go to heaven, while the rest will live in an earthly paradise.

The one true Word is the Bible. Believers who have gone before us have demonstrated how much the Bible meant to them. They sacrificed much to share the Word because they knew it to be the only Word of God. Consider John Wycliffe, who suffered persecution in England for translating the Scriptures into common English from the Latin translations. John Huss was burned at the stake for upholding the authority of the Word of God against the compro-

mises in the church. Other examples include Martin Luther and William Tyndale, who both faced persecution for defending and translating the Word of God.

These are but a few of the saints who have gone before us to preserve, protect, and provide the Word of God to the people. The Word of God cannot be changed, and around the world people are still giving up their lives to honor its integrity.



# Studying God's Word

## Introduction

Last week we talked about the collection of books we know as the New Testament and how it came to be.

- ?** Who remembers the common thread that tied the New Testament authors together? *They were all recording eyewitness accounts under the direction of the Holy Spirit.*
- ?** What was the Holy Spirit's role in the production of the New Testament? *The Spirit brought to remembrance the words and deeds of Christ so that these men could accurately record the texts that were collected as the New Testament (John 14:26).*
- ?** Does anyone recall the approximate date of the final New Testament writings? *Most of the books were completed before AD 70, but the Gospel of John and Revelation were likely written around AD 90, though there is some debate on this.*
- ?** Why was it necessary for a list of the New Testament canon to be recorded? *False teachers were presenting their own writings as Scripture and editing the accepted Scriptures to their own benefit. Organizing a canon was necessary to respond to these false ideas.*
- ?** What general claims about the New Testament do we need to be prepared to respond to in order to defend the faith? *Skeptics often claim that the books were chosen by the church councils to represent their views and give them authority over the people. They also claim that many books should have been included but were not or that the books and letters were written hundreds of years after the actual events. Many manuscripts demonstrate these claims to be false.*
- ?** Did adding the books to a list make them Scripture? *No! These writings were Scripture and carried their own authority. It was their authority that demanded they be included in the list, not the other way around.*

► Write on the board, "How do you know whether or not the Book of Mormon is a revelation from God?"



Slides #1-3



Slides #4

► Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

## The Test of a True Prophet

Our lesson today is going to extend our discussion of what belongs in the canon of Scripture into the modern era. Many claim that the Bible is not enough and that more revelation has come to mankind from God. Knowing how to test the claims of these self-described prophets is the goal of our lesson today, and we will examine several of them to practice our biblical discernment.

 Slides #5–7

- ▶ Encourage your students to take notes in their Student Guides during the lesson.

### Deuteronomy 18:17–22

We are going to start back in the Old Testament and look at how God told the Israelites to judge the prophets among them. Who would like to read Deuteronomy 18:17–22? *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Now, let's ask some questions of the text to make sure we look at all the important facets.

- ? **Who is speaking in this passage?** *God.*
- ? **Who is the audience?** *God is speaking to Moses who is recording the statements for the instruction of the children of Israel, the “them” of verse 18 and the “you” of verse 21.*
- ? **What promise does God make in verse 18?** *To raise up a Prophet from Israel.*
- ? **Why is this singular and not plural?** *This is a prophecy of the Messiah, looking back to Genesis 3:15 and then forward to its fulfillment in Christ (see John 1:19–27 and Acts 3:22–26).*
- ? **What will this Prophet do?** *He will speak all the words God commands him.*
- ? **How will God react to the people who will not listen to his Prophet?** *The phrase is “he will require it of him” indicating God will demand an accounting for the rejection. This is a phrase that must be interpreted in the light of the rest of Scripture, likely pointing to damnation for those who refuse to heed the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

 Slides #8–10

### John 12:44–50

This prophecy is reflected in Jesus' words in John 12:44–50 where he said these words. *Read the passage for the class.*

- ? **What identifies a prophet according to the Deuteronomy passage?** *A prophet speaks on God's behalf as God commands him (vv. 18, 20).*
- ? **How are the people to know if what the prophet has spoken is from God?** *If the prophecy does not come to pass, it is a false prophecy.*
- ? **In what other name can someone claiming to be a prophet speak?** *In the name of other gods.*
- ? **What is prescribed for a prophet who speaks on his own authority but claims God as the source of his proclamation?** *He should be put to death.*
- ? **What word is repeated in verses 20 and 22?** *Presumes/presumptuously.*
- ? **What is the main point of the passage?** *Prophets who claim to speak on God's behalf, but are shown to speak falsely, are to be put to death.*
- ? **What does the passage tell us about God?** *He is serious about the words that he gives to his prophets and hates those who would presume to speak in his name and lead his people astray.*
- ? **Are there other passages in Scripture that relate to this passage?** *Deuteronomy 13:1–5 speaks of the same sentence for anyone who tries to draw*

anyone away from serving God alone. Jeremiah 23:25–34 also carries a similar message. Students might mention many other passages as well, pointing to false teachers in the New Testament passages.

## Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let's talk about the main idea of knowing who is indeed speaking on God's behalf.

- ❓ Based on this passage, how do we know if a prophet is truly speaking on God's behalf? *What he speaks in the name of God will come to pass or be demonstrated to be true.*
- ❓ This definition of prophecy seems to focus on future-telling. Is the role of a prophet always to forecast the future? *No; a prophet's role is to speak the words of God. This could be a call to repentance, a forecasting of events, providing new information about God, or other specific roles.*
- ❓ Is there anything about the language in this passage that makes it difficult to understand, such as figures of speech, difficult words, or other difficulties? *The passage is very straightforward and leaves little room for questioning the passage's intent.*
- ❓ Why does God demand such a strict punishment for this offense? *His Word reflects his character. If someone speaks presumptuously on God's behalf, he is speaking against God's character. Leading people astray is also a serious concern.*

Since God takes this offense seriously, we should also take it seriously. It is no light matter that someone claims to have special revelation from God. We should clearly understand who is speaking for God and who is not; those who make false predictions are false prophets. *If time allows, you could give some specific examples of false predictions made by cult leaders and false prophets.*

Another point I want to emphasize as we move forward with this curriculum is that we want to always be pointing to Jesus. Since we are going through the Bible chronologically, we will be in the Old Testament for quite a while. But we are new covenant believers, so we don't want to neglect Jesus in our study of Scripture.

The beautiful thing is that we find Jesus all over the Old Testament! As we study, we will look for the ways the Old Testament points forward to Jesus. This text is a prime example, as Moses was given the foreknowledge of the Prophet who would come to speak for God. Not just a prophet—there were lots of those—but *the Prophet*. And Jesus is identified as the Prophet Moses testified would come (see John 5:46, 6:14, 7:40; Acts 3:22–23).

As we move through the Old Testament, we need to keep the phrase “Jesus is coming” in front of us at all times. This will help us recognize that the plan of salvation and redemption was not an afterthought, but something God had intended from before the foundation of the world.

## ***Don't Add or Take Away***

Last week we looked at Revelation 22:18–19 in our discussion on the closing of the canon. Continuing from that discussion, we are going to look at some of the modern prophets who claim to have spoken on God's behalf.

 Slide #11

### **Revelation 22:18–19**

Let's read that passage together. *Have someone read Revelation 22:18–19 aloud.*

- ?** Who is speaking? *Jesus is speaking through the Apostle John.*
- ?** What two things does this passage prohibit? *Adding to or taking from the words of the book.*
- ?** What are the two consequences mentioned? *Receiving the plagues and having a share in the tree of life taken away.*
- ?** How are the words of this book described? *They are called prophecy in both verses.*
- ?** What is the main point of the passage? *Don't add to or take away from God's words.*

### **Discover the Truth**

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let's look at how we interpret this in light of some modern claims to revelation from God.

- ?** Who can think of some writings that many believe are on par with the 66 books of the Bible? *Mormons regard the Book of Mormon, The Pearl of Great Price, and Doctrine and Covenants as revelation equivalent to the Bible. Muslims believe the Koran is revealed from Allah through Muhammad. Jehovah's Witnesses have the New World Translation of the Bible. Seventh Day Adventists traditionally hold to the prophetic writings of Ellen G. White (but that attitude is changing within some churches identifying as SDA). Roman Catholics set certain pronouncements from the popes as equivalent to Scripture. Many other cults have various writings and prophets that are set equal to or above the Bible.*
- ?** Is it always easy to tell that a prophet or writing is not from God? *The doctrinal differences are often very subtle, and that is why so many are drawn into false religions. They often use the Bible as support or use biblical language, but with different meanings. For example, Mormons will talk about the importance of the atonement, but they mean something different when they use that word. The Mormon concept of atonement provides the possibility of salvation by works rather than securing salvation by grace (Ephesians 2:1–10). As time allows, discuss other language used by other religions that sounds biblical.*

As we discuss these ideas, please keep in mind that we are not trying to disparage any individual, but to directly challenge ideas that run contrary to the clear teachings of the Bible. These books are all examples of ideas that have been added to Scripture or teachings that have

minimized and set aside the clear truths in the Bible. This is another mark of false prophets and their teachings.

The Watchtower Society—most of you know them as Jehovah’s Witnesses—is a group that has rewritten the Bible to fit their own doctrines. One of the classic changes comes in John 1:1 where they have changed the text to read “. . . and the Word was a God.” This denies the deity of Christ by adding to God’s Word. Along with adding to Scripture, their prophets predicted the end of the world and the second coming in 1914, 1925, and 1975. These individuals must be identified as false prophets since their predictions were false and their ideas contradict the clear teaching of God found in the Bible.

Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, also revised the Bible—rewriting many sections to fit his perverted doctrines. So he is guilty of both adding to the canon and taking away from what God had revealed. In Mormonism, and most other cults, additional revelation by a charismatic leader who calls himself or herself a prophet is the beginning of the end.

The Koran was recorded by scribes after they heard the teachings of Muhammad. Muhammad allegedly received the messages from the angel Gabriel who was delivering the very words of Allah. We must understand the Koran, written in the seventh century, as an attempt to add additional written revelation from a false prophet.

Any teacher who suggests that what is contained in the Bible is not enough or needs to be corrected is a false prophet. The Bible is sufficient, and any claims to the contrary are attacks on God’s very character.

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## ***A Different Gospel Activity***

*The students will be comparing the truth found in God’s Word to some statements from false prophets in order to demonstrate that their words are not inspired by God.*

 Slides #12–13

We have used Hebrews 6:18 and Titus 1:2 to demonstrate that God does not and cannot lie. We have also established that the Holy Spirit inspired the written text of Scripture and the words spoken by the prophets. And finally, we’ve seen that the canon of Scripture is closed. If the prophets spoke the very words of God, and God cannot lie, then the words of the prophets must be true—the prophets cannot lie when under the direction of the Spirit. This gives us a third way to test the truthfulness of claims from those who claim to be modern prophets: If anything that a prophet says contradicts the clear teaching of the Bible, then that prophet cannot be speaking on behalf of God.

With that, let’s look at some statements from those who have claimed to be providing new revelation from God, and test their ideas against

- Pass out the A Different Gospel worksheet.

Scripture—our ultimate authority. We could pick lots of different examples, but for this lesson we are looking at three main false religions: Islam, Mormonism, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

*Pass out the A Different Gospel worksheet. In Galatians 1:6–9, Paul rebukes the church in Galatia for following after a false gospel. The purity of the gospel is at the core of the Christian faith. If anyone teaches against the gospel, even an angel, they are to be accursed (damned). Contradicting the clear words of Scripture is a mark of a false prophet or teacher. Any attacks on the person and work of Christ are attacks on the gospel. This worksheet contains statements from three sources that claim to be prophetic. Compare those statements to the Bible passages given, and we will discuss the conclusions in a few minutes. Organize the students into small groups and discuss the answers as they finish.*

### Connect to the Truth

- ? How do these allegedly prophetic claims stand up when compared to the Bible? *The quote from the Koran calls it blasphemy to believe that Jesus is God while the passage in Colossians affirms the deity of Christ. The Book of Mormon quote says that salvation comes from a mix of grace and works while Ephesians 2 makes it clear that salvation has nothing to do with works. The quote from the Jehovah Witnesses says that Christ did not have a physical body after his resurrection while the Bible makes it clear that his resurrected body was gone from the tomb, touched by the disciples, and a key component of the pure gospel. We can easily conclude that all of these are false prophets, as is anyone who claims to speak for God but contradicts his truth.*

I hope that you can see how it is important to compare the claims of those who would call themselves prophets to what the Bible actually says. A true prophet of God cannot speak what is contrary to the clearly revealed Word of God.

In summary, we can say there are three basic errors promoted by false teachers: 1) They change the gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone; 2) They deny the deity of Christ or another member of the Godhead; 3) They deny the physical death and/or resurrection of Jesus.

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### Application

 Slide #14

We have examined three ways to test the claims of the various writings that have been produced through the centuries. These tests allow us to clearly distinguish between those that are the Word of God and those that are not. You can record these on your worksheet.

Does it make false predictions?

Does it add to or take away from the 66 books of the Bible?

Does it make statements that contradict the Bible?

Making claims of the Bible's exclusivity as the only book that is from God is a very dangerous thing in our society. Most people would tell you that all of the religious books contain truth and we can take all of the good things out of them and combine them in a way that is meaningful to us. These people would say that Jesus, Mohammed, Gandhi, Buddha, and the like are all good teachers, but none of them was totally right. This syncretistic philosophy flies in the face of the biblical worldview. Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matthew 12:30). And he claimed to be the only way to the Father, not one of many (John 14:6). God is the exclusive God, and he holds the exclusive claim to truth.

If you are having a discussion with someone and you steer the conversation toward the gospel, you must point to the Bible as the authoritative source of truth.

- ?** How would you respond if someone says that he follows a different prophet who has heard from God and that the Bible needs to be reinterpreted for us to understand it correctly (e.g., Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses)? *Ultimately, this comes down to an issue of authority; false predictions and internal contradictions can be used. As Christians, we must never abandon the authority of the Bible as we defend the faith. It is the sword we wield in the spiritual battle, and we should not step into the battle and leave it on the sidelines.*
- ?** Many religious people use biblical words, like atonement and forgiveness, but they apply unbiblical definitions to these words. **Which of the three categories of error does this fit into and why is it so dangerous?** *This would fall under adding to or taking away from God's Word. Scripture is used to interpret Scripture, so we must derive our definitions of spiritual terms from the Bible. Changing the definitions has the effect of changing the Bible's actual meaning. This is so dangerous because people can be talking about how important the atonement is to them, but they have an unbiblical understanding of who Jesus is and what he accomplished on the cross. The best lies are sprinkled with truth.*
- ?** How do we guard against being influenced by language that sounds biblical but carries different definitions? *Asking probing questions is important to get to the heart of what the other person is saying and what he really means. "What do you mean by salvation?" or similar questions can help us understand what the other person is thinking. Then we can direct them to the truth found in Scripture.*
- ?** If a prophet claims to be speaking for God but is found to be a false prophet, what/who is the source of the prophecies? *If not from God, then these prophecies must be coming from other gods (Deuteronomy 18:20). The Bible in 2 Corinthians 11:13–15 points to Satan who transforms himself into an angel of light to deceive people. His ministers, the demons, are the power behind the false gods that promote these false prophecies.*

 Slides #15–19

- ?** Why is it important to be able to discern who false prophets are? *For the sake of the purity of the gospel and the acclaim of Christ, we must prevent ourselves from being swayed by false teachers or allowing others to be. Ultimately, the eternal state of men and women is at stake, and we must do this out of compassion for their souls and for the glory of God.*



## Group Prayer Time

*Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.*

- Praise God that he has given us his true Word by which we can test all things.
- Ask God for wisdom that each person will examine the things they hear against the Bible's clear testimony.
- Thank God for those in the church body who help guard sound doctrine.



# The Gospel Is Good News

*The bad news of sin and the good news of Christ.*

## *Lesson Focus*

The central theme of the entire Bible is the good news—the gospel of Jesus Christ. Salvation can come only from the forgiveness freely given to those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ.

## *Key Passages*

Genesis 1:31–2:4, 3:6–7, 3:21–23, 6:5–8, 8:1, 8:15–17, 11:1–9; Romans 3:19–26, 5:12, 5:18–19; John 1:14–17; 1 Corinthians 15:1–5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 21:1–8

## *Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- Identify the gospel as the central theme of the Bible.
- Explain why the good news makes sense only in light of the bad news.

## *Memory Verse*

**2 Timothy 3:16–17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

# Lesson Preparation

## *Come On In*

Write on the board, "Which should come first: good news or bad news?"

## *Studying God's Word*

Print one The Gospel Through the Seven C's of History worksheet for each student.  
Print and cut apart the Scripture Strips.

# Optional Supplements

## *Video Clips*

Preview the recommended video(s) before class. If appropriate, show to your class and discuss before, during, or after the lesson.

- The Last Adam (15:44)
- Seven C's Creation Cube Training (9:34)

## *PowerPoint*

You may want to use the PowerPoint presentation provided to enhance your teaching.



The required lesson and supplementary materials can be accessed from the **Teacher Digital Resources** under *Lesson 9*.

# Prepare to Share

## Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

In past lessons, we have introduced our students to the Bible—where it came from, how to study it, and why we can believe it. These are all critical areas of learning, but what is the central message of the Bible? Let's start at the beginning in the garden of Eden where Adam's fall into sin affected us all. In Genesis, we hear of God's plan of a Redeemer who would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). Jesus the Messiah fulfilled this prophecy—revealing God's plan of redemption.

To truly understand the good news of the Bible, we must first grasp the bad news. Because God is a holy God, he cannot dwell with sinful man, and his perfect justice demands that he punish disobedience. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). This is the bad news—that all people are separated from God, born spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), under his just penalty, and destined for an eternity in hell.

There is absolutely no way that we can work our way to God or ever be good enough to merit eternal life. In fact, the Bible makes it clear that there are no

## Historical/Apologetics Background

In today's pluralistic society with its many religions and insistence on tolerance, it is important we understand that the good news of the Bible is not just one way among many. Rather, the Bible clearly teaches that faith in this gospel is the **ONLY** way to be reconciled to God. Jesus is the **ONLY** mediator between man and God (1 Timothy 2:5). In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." And Acts 4:12 confirms that there is no other name but Jesus' by which we must be saved.

Why is Jesus the only way? Because, as Dr. Bruce Ware puts it:

- Christ alone was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin and as such, he alone qualifies to be Savior (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38).
- Christ alone is God incarnate and as such, he alone qualifies to be Savior (John 1:1–18; Hebrews

good works that will commend us to God. Isaiah 64:6 likens our righteousness to filthy rags.

The good news is that God sent his Son, Jesus, to live a sinless life and die on the cross to pay the penalty of death that we all deserve (2 Corinthians 5:21). Through the death of Christ, we see the justice of God satisfied and the love of God demonstrated (Romans 5:8).

Jesus' death for our sins, his burial, and his resurrection are the heart of the good news. So, what are we required to do to receive forgiveness and gain eternity with our Creator? Repent of our sins and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14–15; John 3:16; Acts 16:30–31; Acts 20:20–21). The Bible promises that those who repent and trust in Christ as Savior will be saved. And when that occurs, we are adopted by God as sons, joint heirs with Christ (Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:16–17); we are born again to a new and living hope (1 Peter 1:3); we become new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17); and we have the sure hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2).

It is not until we grasp the bad news—we are sinners in desperate need of a Savior—that we will appreciate the good news—we can be reconciled to God by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

1:1–3, 2:14–18; Philippians 2:5–11; 1 Timothy 2:5–6).

- Christ alone lived a sinless life and as such, he alone qualifies to be Savior (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15, 7:23–28, 9:13–14; 1 Peter 2:21–24).
- Christ alone died a penal, substitutionary death and as such, he alone qualifies to be Savior (Isaiah 53:4–6; Romans 3:21–26; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Christ alone rose from the dead, triumphant over sin and as such, he alone qualifies to be Savior (Acts 2:22–24; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8).<sup>1</sup>

No other person or man-made religion offers the true path of salvation and reconciliation with God. Merely acknowledging that God exists or believing

<sup>1</sup> Bruce Ware, "Only One Way? The Exclusivity of Jesus Christ and the Gospel," [www.christianity.com/god/jesus-christ/only-one-way-the-exclusivity-of-jesus-christ-and-the-gospel-11602124.html](http://www.christianity.com/god/jesus-christ/only-one-way-the-exclusivity-of-jesus-christ-and-the-gospel-11602124.html)

there is a God does not save anyone. Scripture tells us that even the demons believe (James 2:19). It is only through repentance and faith in Jesus and his work on the cross that anyone can be saved.

The early church preached this true gospel amid much opposition. For the first two centuries, Christians were persecuted, killed, and ostracized. Yet, the gospel spread, and the blood of the martyrs only seemed to validate the message, increasing its power.

In AD 312, the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and commanded official toleration of Christianity and other religions. Then in AD 380, Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official religion of the empire. From this point on, Christians could worship openly, and they enjoyed the protection and favor of the government.

Throughout the following centuries, segments of the church began to include doctrines and practices that were not found in the Bible. These included the special authority of the Pope, the concept of purgatory as a place for after-life purification of sins, the immaculate conception and assumption of Mary, the doctrine of transubstantiation (that the bread in the Eucharist becomes the true body of Christ and the wine becomes his blood), and the general belief that

one's good works had to outweigh the bad in order to attain eternal life.

While the true gospel had been corrupted by officials in the church, God always preserved a remnant who believed the truth of his Word. And in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this remnant courageously began the movement known as the Reformation. God used these believers to restore the gospel of justification by faith in Christ alone, by grace alone—through the truth of the Bible alone.

Today, we again find the professing church corrupted and moving away from the truth and simplicity of the gospel message. Many churches are distorting the Word of God to attract more people to their services. These false messages can range from prosperity preaching (God wants us all to be healthy and wealthy), to “easy believism” (just say a few words and you will be saved for eternity), to counseling sessions based on secular psychology (come see us and we can fix your life), to universalism (anyone can get to heaven as long as you are sincere in what you believe), and the list goes on. As Christians, we are called to be discerning about what we hear and to stand on the authority of God's Word alone.



# Studying God's Word

## Introduction

We have been talking about the foundation of a biblical worldview over the last eight weeks. We have talked about who God is, how he has revealed himself to us in creation and the Bible, and why we can trust the Bible as the authority we look to in our lives. The Bible is authoritative because it reflects the character of the triune God who gave it to us. Although it was written down by men, it was superintended by God the Holy Spirit, and the writings made through these men were inspired—breathed out by God.

But what if we believe all of that is true yet don't heed the main message of the Bible? That is the topic of our lesson today. We are going to look at the message that is the very core of the Bible's teaching—the message of the gospel.

- Write on the board, "Which should come first: good news or bad news?"

 Slides #1–3

- Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.
- Hand out the Scripture Strips as students are coming in. Ask them to find the passages and mark them, and to be ready to read them later in the lesson.

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## What Is the Gospel?

First, we want to make sure that we know what the gospel is. The root of the word is found in the Greek word *euangelion* (yoo-ang-GHEL-ee-on), which means "true message" or "good news." This is also the word we get "evangelism" from. When we evangelize, we are sharing the good news of what Christ has done for us in the hope that the person we are sharing with will experience that same freedom from sin and death.

 Slide #4

### 1 Corinthians 15:1–5

Listen as I read 1 Corinthians 15:1–5 where Paul explains, in a condensed form, what the gospel is. Listen for the three elements he mentions.

 Slides #5–6

- ? What are the three elements of the gospel Paul preached? *Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day.*

- Encourage your students to take notes in their Student Guides during the lesson.

Now this is surely a very simple understanding of the gospel, but it communicates the idea that Jesus died for sins and was resurrected after his burial. But if we were to simply walk up to someone and say, "Jesus died for your sins," we would not be helping the average person to understand the gospel. They might claim that they are not sinners or that their good works outweigh their bad.

Think about the question on the board; what is it that makes the gospel good news?

- ? Why is the good news of the gospel good news? *The good news can be good only because there is bad news. It is necessary for someone to understand the peril he is in before he can appreciate being saved from the danger. In order for someone to understand the good, he must understand the bad.*

## Discover the Truth

In order to understand the need for a cure, there must be a diagnosis. We know that the disease is sin and that the cure is Christ’s work on the cross. However, we need to help those who do not understand this truth. In our culture today, most people don’t have a biblical worldview or even know the basic message of the Bible. If we use church lingo, people will not understand what we mean. For example, if I say to someone, “You need to be saved,” they are going to look at me and say, “Saved from what? I am doing just fine.”

There are many different evangelistic methods that can be used to explain the gospel, but we are going to use the Seven C’s of History to help explain the relationship between the bad news and the good news. We will develop the idea of these Seven C’s more fully in a future lesson, but the basic idea is to give a big-picture perspective of the history of the universe that explains the bad news that leads to the need for the good news. *Hand out the worksheets.*

## *The Seven C’s and the Gospel*

So, let’s walk through the Seven C’s, relating them to the bad news/good news understanding of the gospel. I have given several of you Bible references. When we get to those passages, be ready to read them out loud. After each passage is read, I am going to give a short summary of the basic truths in the passage. You can also use this worksheet to take a few notes as we discuss these ideas.

 Slides #7–8

### **Genesis 1:31–2:4**

**Creation**—Please read Genesis 1:31–2:4.

When God created the earth and man, everything was described as “very good.” There was no death, disease, suffering, or sin in the world. Adam and Eve lived in relationship with God with only one thing they were prohibited from doing—eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Because God is the Creator, he has the right to establish the rules that his creation must follow. At creation, the world was perfect and free from the influence of sin.

 Slides #9–12

### **Genesis 3:6–7, 3:21–23; Romans 5:12, 5:18–19**

**Corruption**—Please read Genesis 3:6–7, 3:21–23, and then Romans 5:12 and 5:18–19.

God existed in three persons before he created the universe. Since God is eternal and omniscient, he knew the plans he had for his creation. Part of that plan includes the redemption of mankind after his fall from perfection into sin. 1 Peter 1:20 tells us that Christ was “foreknown before the foundation of the world” to be our Redeemer.

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, their rebellion brought sin into the world and corrupted God’s “very good” creation. Although they tried to cover their sin with their own efforts (the fig leaves), God made clothes of skins for them to hide their shame.

- ? What can we infer happened if God made garments of skin (Genesis 3:21)? *This is the first record of animal death and represents a foreshadowing of the death of the perfect Lamb who would come to take away, not just cover up, the sins of the world. Adam and Eve had tried to cover their own sin, but the shame remained until God covered the sin with a blood sacrifice, just as he would do later with the spotless Lamb of God.*

The coming of a Savior was also prophesied in the curse pronounced to the serpent in Genesis 3:15. The gospel message of redemption from sin is present from the very beginning. This plan of redemption, the gospel, is woven throughout the Bible.

The corruption that Adam brought into the world was passed to all of his descendants. The punishment for Adam’s sin was death and isolation from God. The same is true for each person that has ever lived—that is the beginning of the bad news.

### Genesis 6:5–8, 8:1, 8:15–17

 Slides #13–16

**Catastrophe**—Please read Genesis 6:5–8 and then Genesis 8:1 and 8:15–17.

Sin continued to increase on the Earth, and God judged the sinfulness of man with a flood that destroyed all of the air-breathing, land-dwelling creatures—including every human. Only those on the ark were spared the judgment of God.

- ? Why was Noah saved from the judgment of the flood? *Noah’s rescue was not because Noah was such a good man, but because he found favor/grace in the eyes of God (Genesis 6:8). He was only blameless in his generation (6:9) because he was looking forward to what Christ (the promised Savior) would do on his behalf. No man has ever been perfect through his own efforts, but is accepted as righteous only by the grace of God through the work of Christ.*

The flood is an example of God’s justice. Because God is a holy God, he must punish sin. The flood is a concrete example of God’s judgment of sinners that we can point to from Scripture.

### Genesis 11:1–9

 Slides #17–20

**Confusion**—Please read Genesis 11:1–9.

After the flood, Noah’s descendants were commanded to fill the earth. But this passage gives us a different picture. They were settling in one place. In Genesis 11:21 (after the flood), God acknowledged that “the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth” and that became evident as the people desired to make a name for themselves. They were turning away from worshipping the true God and toward worshipping idols.

This is another reminder that man is sinful at his core and that God, in his holy justice, must judge sinners.

God decided to confuse their language and the people were scattered around the globe. Despite skin color, nationality, facial features, or language, all people can trace their heritage back to Adam through Noah. All of mankind is in need of salvation from their sin because all are descended from Adam.

- ? Why did Jesus command the disciples to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19), and why do we see people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation worshipping Christ in heaven (Revelation 5:9)? *The existence of these different groups is explained by the events surrounding the Tower at Babel. All of these groups need salvation because they have all sinned, having inherited a sin nature through Adam.*

As we use the Seven C's as a framework, there is a large gap between Confusion and Christ, jumping from Genesis 11 to Matthew 1. One additional C we might insert in this gap is Commandments to acknowledge the giving of the law to Moses. (Again, the whole framework will be developed more fully in lesson 11 and this gap will be explained.)

### **Romans 3:19–26**

Paul explains the connection between the law and the gospel in many places in his writings. In order for the bad news of the corruption of sin to make sense, individuals must apply it to themselves. We can recite Romans 3:23 to people (“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”), but we need to look at that verse in its context. Please read Romans 3:19–26.

- ? According to verse 19, what is the purpose of the law? *To stop the mouths of those who deny their guilt before God.*
- ? Is the law able to make anyone righteous or justify anyone? *No, not according to verses 20 and 21.*
- ? Who can keep the law perfectly? *No one, apart from Christ, can keep the law.*
- ? How does this passage explain we can be justified and made righteous before God? *We are made righteous through faith in what Christ has completed on the cross.*

So the law is a tool that we can use to help people see their sin in light of God's standard of perfection. The Ten Commandments are a summary of God's standard. Paul referred to these in Romans 7 as a way for each individual to personally understand how he has sinned against God. Use the commandments as a mirror to help people understand that the bad news applies to them. Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever stolen anything? Have you ever put anything before God (idolatry) or used his name in a loose way? Those questions can bring conviction of sin as the

 Slides #21–24

Holy Spirit accompanies the message we are communicating. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit's work to bring conviction as we proclaim the truth.

So that is the bad news—each person has sinned and is in need of salvation from God's just judgment of his sin. Jesus is the only one who has ever lived on Earth in perfect obedience to God's law. In this sense, we can also use Jesus' life as a way to show people how far short of perfect obedience they fall. With the bad news set forth in a clear way, we have paved the way to understanding how good the good news of the gospel really is! If we want to see someone saved, we have to help them see they are lost.

### **John 1:14–17**

**Christ**—Please read John 1:14–17.

As promised since the curse, the Savior was coming. The Israelites had received through the prophets an expanded understanding of who the Messiah would be. He would be born of a virgin in Bethlehem from the line of Judah through David's house. Many other prophecies of the Messiah were given to the prophets and fulfilled in the incarnation of Christ.

Christ came into the world as God in the flesh. He lived a perfect life—never sinning once. He became the last Adam to act as the representative for mankind to offer them the hope of freedom from their sin and the judgment that the first Adam brought into the world.

### **2 Corinthians 5:21**

**Cross**—Please read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Christ lived a sinless life, and he willingly offered himself as a perfect sacrifice. God poured out his wrath for sin onto Jesus while he was hanging on the cross. More than just the physical punishment he faced, the cup he was afraid to drink (Matthew 26:38–46) was the cup of wrath that God the Father poured out on God the Son.

To demonstrate that he was victorious over the death that Adam had brought into the world, he rose bodily from the grave on the third day. He appeared to more than 500 witnesses and then ascended to his rightful place at the right hand of the Father.

That is the good news that offers us freedom from the bad news of sin and judgment. When we repent of our sins before God and put our trust in the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross (Acts 20:21), we are transferred from death to life. Rather than facing the eternal punishment for our sins in hell, we can spend eternity with God in heaven. Christ pays our penalty for sin, and we receive his righteousness—a great exchange!

### **Revelation 21:1–8**

**Consummation**—Please read Revelation 21:1–8.

 Slides #25–26

 Slide #27

 Slides #28–32

Christ will return to judge the world in righteousness, the curse will be removed, and a new heaven and earth will be the dwelling place of those who are in Christ for eternity while the lake of fire awaits those who die in their sins apart from Christ.

## Discover the Truth

In Romans 7, Paul described how he knew of his need for salvation because of his understanding of what sin was. In order for the good news of salvation from sin to make sense, a person has to understand the bad news of sin entering the world and corrupting God's perfection. Understanding the true history of the world helps to make the message of the gospel clear.

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## Application

I hope you can see not only how the Seven C's of History give us a framework for understanding the big picture of biblical history, but also how God has worked through that history to redeem a creation that is in rebellion against him. As we seek to share the gospel with a world that is enslaved to sin and facing God's judgment, we must first help them to see that the bad news of sin is the reason we need the good news of Christ's death on behalf of sinners. Whether we point to Jesus as the perfect standard of obedience or use God's law as it is summarized in the Ten Commandments, communicating the good news of the gospel needs to start with showing individuals the bad news and their need for the Savior.

Let's talk about how these ideas might be used in our everyday lives. If we don't seek to apply what we are learning from the Word, we are deceiving ourselves (James 1:22).

- ❓ Do you see this method of presenting the gospel as being helpful? Why? *Allow discussion.*
- ❓ What other method have you used to present the gospel? How does that method compare to what we have just discussed? *Allow discussion. Some may mention ideas like the Romans Road or the Chasm/Bridge diagram.*
- ❓ Why is it essential to understand the historical relationship between the first Adam and the last Adam? *If Adam was not a historical person who brought sin into the world, we wouldn't need a real man to come and be our Savior. Paul made a clear connection between the two Adams in Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:21.*
- ❓ Is it important to understand where sin came from in order to understand the gospel rightly? *Without understanding that sin has impacted every person who has ever lived, since it is inherited from Adam, some may wrongly conclude that certain people could be good enough to merit heaven.*

 Slides #33–41

- ?** How does the bad news/good news connection help make the gospel message clear? *Allow for discussion.*
- ?** Why is it appropriate to say that the message of the gospel is woven throughout the entirety of the Bible? *Throughout the Scriptures we see a thread of redemption. Redemption could be called the central theme of Scripture. Beginning in Genesis, God's plan to redeem humanity through the person and work of Christ is revealed.*
- ?** What do you see as the biggest stumbling blocks for unbelievers as you share the truth of God's Word with them? *Allow for discussion.*
- ?** What are the bare essentials of the gospel that must be communicated, regardless of the method you might use? *All people are sinful by nature and in their individual actions; God's just judgment against sin is death and eternal punishment of sinners; Jesus Christ is the Savior who lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and rose on the third day for the forgiveness of sins; Those who will repent and trust in Jesus' substitutionary death can have their sins forgiven and receive eternal life.*
- ?** What areas do you need to grow in to be better able to understand and share the gospel with others? *Allow for discussion.*



## Group Prayer Time

*Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.*

- Praise God for his mercy shown toward sinners in Christ's sacrifice, evident throughout the pages of the Bible.
- Ask God for boldness to take advantage of opportunities to share the gospel.
- Thank God for the work of the Holy Spirit who brings regeneration to those we share the gospel with.





# Unit Review

*A review of Lessons 1–9.*

Every tenth lesson in the curriculum is designed to be a review lesson. The younger grades will be doing various activities and reviewing the teaching. You may choose to do some sort of review activity; have a time of discussion, reflecting on what has been taught in the unit; or use the following video resource to extend or reinforce the concepts that have been taught.

## *Apologetics Focus: Scripture under Scrutiny Video (35 min.)*

Many people, both Christians and skeptics, struggle with answering the question of how we got the Bible and why we can trust it. In this video, Pastor Brian Edwards explores the topic of the inspiration of Scripture and what makes it unique with respect to every other book in the world.

After showing the video, use these questions to engage the class in discussion.

1. How has your understanding of the inspiration of Scripture changed as a result of our lessons in this unit and what was taught in this video?
2. Christians can think of the Bible as the history book of the universe. Why is the Bible not used as a history textbook in most history classrooms today?

3. The authority of the Bible is founded upon its inerrancy, inspiration, and sufficiency. What happens to the authority of the Bible if we deny any one of these aspects?
4. What makes the Bible unique when compared to other books?
5. What is the relationship between our understanding of our origins and our standard of morality?
6. What passages of Scripture are most encouraging to you as you consider your trust in the Bible?
7. Should we use the Bible's claims about itself to show unbelievers that the Bible is trustworthy? Why or why not?
8. If the Bible is the ultimate authority, can scientific or archaeological evidence prove it to be true or false?
9. How would you personally explain the inspiration of the Bible to a skeptic?
10. What questions do you still have about the Bible and its trustworthiness?