

Lessons 1–10

God's Word Is Our Foundation

Unit

1



Adult
Student Guide



Answers
BIBLE CURRICULUM

Answers Bible Curriculum

Unit 1 • Adult Student

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Introduction to Answers Bible Curriculum

We hear many competing truth-claims in our culture today. Scientists claim to be able to “prove” many things, including what happened in the distant past. There are a multitude of religions and faiths, all claiming to have the one “truth.” Even within the church we are bombarded by conflicting Christian TV programs and books, each teaching with authority on topics ranging from marriage to prophecy to counseling to evangelism to heaven and hell. What are we to make of it? And how can we possibly sort out truth from error, or even the good from the bad?

You are starting a journey of discovery into God’s Word, the Bible. Over the next 10 weeks, we will be looking at what the Bible is, where it came from, who wrote it, why we can trust it, and how God intends to use it in our lives. Beyond that, we’ll begin to explore

who this God is who revealed his mind and will through the pages of Scripture. What is he like? What are his attributes? How might our view of God be distorted?

We think you'll find this program different from any you have done before. You will not only learn what's in the Bible, but you'll learn why it's there, why it's true, and how to defend it. Your questions will be answered, your faith encouraged, and your view of God expanded.

We encourage you to read the Prepare to Learn section before class each week. This will provide important background information so that you will get more from the lesson.



God's Word Is Our Foundation

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

Psalms 19:7–11, 86:11, 119:105

What You Will Learn

- How to use the Bible as the starting point for making decisions.
- The qualities of God's Word.

Memory Verse

Psalms 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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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; astronomy—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, interest to us. It is time to get back to Christ’s resurrection, the Trinity, the foundational beliefs of the Word and judgment—are no longer of any of God, beginning in Genesis..

Studying God’s Word

What are the most pressing problems in our society today?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

A Lamp and a Light

Psalm 86:11

What is God’s Word? Activity

Psalm 119:105

What Is God’s Word?

Identify the various roles of God’s Word from Psalm 19:7–11.

IdentityDescriptionRole

LawPerfectRevives the soul

Application

1. In what areas do you see someone’s worldview having the most impact on that person’s life?

2. Where do you see a difference in worldview causing conflict in your life and relationships with others?
3. Why do people reject the Bible as the absolute authority?
4. How would you attempt to change a person's understanding of the Bible's authority and reliability?
5. 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?



Prayer Requests



Attributes of God

Lesson Focus

God's attributes are demonstrated in direct claims from Scripture and are also understood from the way God interacts with his creation.

Key Passages

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

What You Will Learn

- The necessity of using God's Word when identifying and/or explaining the attributes of God.
- 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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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.

Question 4 of the historic Westminster Shorter Catechism, penned

in the 1640s asks, “What is God?” The answer? God is a Spirit (John 4:24), infinite (Jeremiah 23:24), eternal (Psalm 90:2), and unchangeable (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17) in his being, wisdom (Psalm 147:5), power (Revelation 19:6), holiness (1 Samuel 2:2), justice (Psalm 7:11), goodness (Psalm 107:8), and truth (Deuteronomy 32:4).

When the Lord descended in the cloud to speak with Moses, he gave testimony to his very character—he proclaimed himself as merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness, always truthful, forgiving, and at the same time, just—not clearing the guilty (Exodus 34:6–7).

Knowing God and knowing that he is perfect in every one of his attributes is imperative to maturing in the Christian faith. That is why we have incorporated teaching these attributes as part of this Bible curriculum, so the next generation will know, love, honor, revere, and fear the God of all creation!

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 amazing 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

What is God like?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

God Declared His Attributes to Moses

Exodus 34:4–8

Exodus 20:5–6

Romans 5:8

God Is Love

1 John 4:7–21

God Is Eternal

Psalms 90:1–6

Worshipping God Through Prayer Activity

Write out a short prayer or meditation that you can use throughout the next week to bring to remembrance those things you may have failed to worship God for.

Application

1. Why is it important to understand all that the Bible has to say about God's attributes?

2. How can a study of God's attributes lead you into a deeper understanding of your salvation?

3. How do you see the attributes of God questioned by those in your school or workplace? How can you respond to these questions?



Prayer Requests



We Can Know God Exists

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

What You Will Learn

- That God exists outside time and he is the Creator of everything, including time.
- 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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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

How do we prove God exists?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

God Is Eternal

Genesis 1:1–2

John 18:1–6

God Doesn't Believe in Atheists

Romans 1:18–23

Psalms 19:1–4

Worldly Wisdom Activity

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–31, and then discuss with a partner the answers to the two questions below. Record your observations.

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?

Application

1. What does Scripture have to say about believers' responsibility for sharing their faith?
2. If someone asks you how you know God exists, how would you respond?
3. What is the proper role of evidence in our apologetics?

4. Does Romans 1:20 teach us to use physical evidences before Scripture?
5. Does Psalm 19:1 teach us to use physical evidences (“the heavens”) before Scripture?
6. Are Christians sometimes more comfortable explaining scientific evidences rather than Scripture when speaking with skeptics about God’s existence?
7. Is an evidence-first approach to evangelism/apologetics ever useful?

8. Has any of you ever had a skeptic question why you believe in God?

9. 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?



Prayer Requests



The Trinity

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

What You Will Learn

- Biblical support for the Trinity.
- How to 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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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

How would you describe the Trinity using an analogy?

Record how each of the following passages informs our understanding of the triune nature of God.

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit All Created

Genesis 1:1–3

Psalms 33:6; Hebrews 11:3

John 1:1–5

God Is Three in One

Isaiah 44:23–24

Colossians 1:15–17

Psalms 104:30

The Baptism of Jesus

Matthew 3:13–17

Trinitarian Heresies Activity

Complete the Trinitarian Heresies worksheet.

Application

1. Why is it important to have a proper understanding of the Trinity?
2. 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?
3. When you consider the Trinity, what is the most difficult aspect for you to understand?
4. How does understanding the Trinity affect your view of God?



Prayer Requests



God's Word Guides Us

Lesson Overview

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 training 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

What You Will Learn

- The roles of God and men in writing the Bible.
- The four ways God's Word guides us according to Scripture.

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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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; 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.

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 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

Is anything impossible for God?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Scripture Came from God

2 Peter 1:19–21

Psalm 119:105

Impossible for God?

Complete the Impossible for God? worksheet.

Take notes as you study the following passage.

God's Word Is Profitable

2 Timothy 3:16–17

Define these terms:

- Teaching/Doctrine –
- Reproof –
- Correction –
- Training in righteousness –

Application

1. 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?



God Preserves His Word

Lesson Overview

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

What You Will Learn

- How Jesus affirmed the authority of the Old Testament.
- Examples 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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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).

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).

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 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—willingly 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

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

Take notes as you study the following passages.

On the Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13–32

God's Word Is Recorded

Jeremiah 36:1–4, 36:17–19

God's Word Is Preserved

Jeremiah 36:20–32

Application

1. 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?
2. 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?

3. 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?

4. What questions has this topic raised in your mind, and how might you go about answering those questions?



Prayer Requests



God's Word Is Complete

Lesson Overview

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

What You Will Learn

- The role of the Holy Spirit in writing the New Testament.
- The approximate date of the closing of the canon of Scripture.

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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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 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).

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?
- 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

Why are there exactly 27 books in the New Testament?

Take notes as you study the following passage.

The Holy Spirit Will Teach You

John 14:25–26

A Common Thread Activity

Complete the A Common Thread worksheet.

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Don't Add or Take Away

Revelation 22:18–19

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

Application

1. 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?

2. How do we respond to claims that the New Testament was written hundreds of years after the lives of the apostles?

3. How does what we have discussed today challenge ideas that you may have had about the New Testament?

4. What about today's lesson gives you encouragement or assurance about your faith?



Prayer Requests



Don't Change God's Word

Lesson Overview

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

What You Will Learn

- How to differentiate between those who speak for God and those who are false prophets.
- 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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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.

	Bible	Islam	Mormonism	Jehovah's Witnesses
View of Origins	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.
View of Christ	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.
Sin and Salvation	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.
Life After Death	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 compromises 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

How do you know whether or not the Book of Mormon is a revelation from God?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

The Test of a True Prophet

Deuteronomy 18:17–22

John 12:44–50

Don't Add or Take Away

Revelation 22:18–19

A Different Gospel Activity

Complete the A Different Gospel worksheet.

Application

1. 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)?

2. 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?

3. How do we guard against being influenced by language that sounds biblical but carries different definitions?
4. 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?
5. Why is it important to be able to discern who false prophets are?



Prayer Requests



The Gospel Is Good News

Lesson Overview

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

What You Will Learn

- What the central theme of the Bible is.
- 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.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural 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 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.

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 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).¹

¹ Bruce Ware, “Only One Way? The Exclusivity of Jesus Christ and the Gospel,” christianity.com/god/jesus-christ/only-one-way-the-exclusivity-of-jesus-christ-and-the-gospel-11602124.html

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

Which should come first: good news or bad news? Why?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

What Is the Gospel?

1 Corinthians 15:1–5

The Seven C’s and the Gospel

Genesis 1:31–2:4

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

Genesis 6:5–8, 8:1, 8:15–17

Genesis 11:1–9

Romans 3:19–26

John 1:14–17

2 Corinthians 5:21

Revelation 21:1–8

Application

1. Do you see this method of presenting the gospel being useful? Why?
2. What other method have you used to present the gospel? How does that method compare to what we have just discussed?
3. Why is it essential to understand the historical relationship between the first Adam and the last Adam?

4. Is it important to understand where sin came from in order to understand the gospel rightly?
5. How does the bad news/good news connection help make the gospel message clear?
6. Why is it appropriate to say that the message of the gospel is woven throughout the entirety of the Bible?
7. What do you see as the biggest stumbling blocks for unbelievers as you share the truth of God's Word with them?

