



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 but 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% 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 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 English Standard Version (ESV)

How to Use ABC

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, lesson background material, lesson preparation instructions, scripted lesson, activity instructions, etc. The tenth lesson of each unit is a review lesson.

Student Guide—One 64-page book for students with lesson background material, space for taking notes in class, and additional application questions and Scriptures to study during the week.

Teacher Digital Resources—Digital download that includes all of the classroom handouts, teacher aids, lesson illustrations, etc., and any video or audio clips used in the lessons.

Family Devotional—One 44-page 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.

In addition, a set of large classroom posters enhances the lessons and provides visual reminders of important truths. These classroom posters for Unit 1 include:

Books of the Bible

Attributes of God

Optional, but highly recommended for older 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, PowerPoint presentations, etc. These may be accessed at 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 or by calling 800-778-3390.

Teacher Lesson

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 as you prepare and teach.

Lesson Overview

Lesson Focus—Each lesson has a short statement summarizing the content of the lesson for that week.

Key Passages—These are the Bible passages that will be studied in the lesson. Sometimes it is just one passage, but often it is several passages. Your teaching will be more rewarding and fruitful if you commit to familiarizing yourself with the Key Passages before class.

Objectives—Each lesson presents specific learning objectives. These are what we hope (expect!) the students will understand by the end of the lesson.

Lesson Preparation

This handy 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 you can choose optional videos, gather supplies, and print necessary materials from the Teacher Digital Resources.

Memory Verse—Students will work on memorizing two passages per unit. Feel free to use whatever means you would like to encourage and help your students memorize the Bible.

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 are for 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. You can get more information on many of the lessons and topics by accessing the Online Resource Page at AnswersBibleCurriculum.com. We encourage you to be prepared for teaching each week by taking advantage of these resources.

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.

For those who have more teaching time, we have included, as mentioned above, Optional Supplements for most lessons. These are usually video clips. We have also provided a short PowerPoint presentation for each lesson with the Key Passages and the main points of the lesson.

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.

Memory Verse—We encourage you to practice the memory verse every week with your students.

Studying God's Word—This is the main teaching part of the lesson. We have written it 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, instructions, and other lesson elements. These are included to assist you in planning and teaching the lesson.

Activity—For most lessons there is an activity that is either done in small groups or individually. It may be a Bible study or a group discussion.

Applying God's Word—This is an essential element of each lesson and should not be skipped. It reviews the lesson and presents relevant application points. The sections include:

- **What You Heard in the Word**—A summary of the lesson's main points, restating the information that addressed the objectives.
- **God's Word in the Real World**—A discussion on how God's truth can be applied to your students' lives, how they can share these truths with others, and how they can answer questions from a skeptical world.

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.

Online Resource Page

We have established pages on our website where you, your students, and their parents can find links to articles with more background information on some of the lessons. This page can be found at AnswersBibleCurriculum.com.

This is also where we will post any corrections, additional worksheets, supplementary materials, etc.

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 their lives will demonstrate a deep trust in Christ and reflect His character. To God be the glory!

Limited License to Reproduce

Pre-printed Edition

A limited, non-exclusive, non-transferable, non-sublicensable license is hereby granted to a single local church or organization to print copies of the PDF materials in the Teacher Digital Resources if 1) you are the original purchaser; 2) you are using the copies for noncommercial purposes (such as for teaching in class) exclusively within your single local church or organization (multi-campus churches, and national/regional denominations are not covered under this license); and 3) you follow the instructions provided in the curriculum pertaining to the printable materials.

This license is for the specific purchaser of the product and does not include affiliated groups or organizations, or other churches or groups in the same denomination as the purchaser, not

identified as the actual purchaser. There is no limit to the number of printed copies for use within the single local church or organization that is the actual purchaser. None of the material in this curriculum may be reproduced for any commercial promotion, advertising, or sale of a product or service, or to share with any other persons, churches, groups, or organizations.

The media (audio/video) portions are copyrighted and duplication is prohibited. This license is for materials in the Teacher Digital Resources only and does NOT include reproduction rights for pre-printed teacher books, student guides, student take-home sheets, or posters, except on an emergency basis when purchased quantities are not sufficient for a given week.

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.

Activity: What Is God’s Word?

Students will identify the role of God’s Word in their lives from Psalm 19:7–11.

Student Guides

Pencils

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)
- Accuracy of Scripture (9:31)
- Teaching God’s Word (2:32)
- 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

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).

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).

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, 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.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



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.

- Write on the board, “What are the most pressing problems in our society today?”

 Slides #1–3



Studying God’s Word

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.

- 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.

Psalm 86:11

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

 Slide #4

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.

- 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.

- ? **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.*

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.*
- ? 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*

Slide #5

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

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.



What Is God’s Word?

 Slides #7–10

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.



Applying God's Word

What You Heard in the Word

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.*

God's Word in the Real World

🖥️ 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.

Activity: Worshipping God through Prayer

Students will identify at least one attribute of God that they have neglected to praise Him for and focus on that during the upcoming week.

Student Guides

Pencils

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 Power (5:15)
- God’s Authority and the 7C’s (7:00)
- 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 amazing

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!

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 the one who committed no sin, yet was made sin for us—despicable sinners—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 pass by as Moses 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).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



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



Studying God’s Word

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.*

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

🖥️ 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.*

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

Slide #10

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.*

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

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.



Worshipping God through Prayer

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.



Applying God's Word

What You Heard in the Word

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.*

God's Word in the Real World

 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.



Activity: Worldly Wisdom

Students will discuss the truths recorded in 1 Corinthians 1:18–31.

Student Guides

Pencils

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).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



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?”



Studying God’s Word

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

- ? **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.*

🖥 Slides #8–10

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.

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.*

- ? 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.



Worldly Wisdom

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.*



Applying God's Word

What You Heard in the Word

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.

God's Word in the Real World

- ? 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.*

Psalm 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.
- Ice cubes
- Water
- Small saucepan

Activity: Trinitarian Heresies

Students will compare various historical Trinitarian heresies to the Bible and the Athanasian Creed.

- Print one Athanasian Creed and one Trinitarian Heresies sheet for each student.
- Pencils



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

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.

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* dwells all

the fullness of deity 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).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



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



Studying God’s Word

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, H₂O. 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 gives us a glimpse into the Trinity, so let’s examine the passage using

 Slide #4

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).

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

 Slide #10

- ? **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.*

Psalm 104:30

 Slide #11

- ? **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.*

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.



Trinitarian Heresies

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.



Applying God's Word

What You Heard in the Word

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.

 Slide #14

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.

- **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.*

God's Word in the Real World

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.