



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 application questions.

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

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:

The Books of the Bible

The Attributes of God

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

Teacher Digital Resources

When you purchased *Answers Bible Curriculum*, you received access to a digital library that contains items such as activity instructions, lesson illustrations, video clips, and PowerPoint presentations. These may be accessed at MyAnswers.com/abc-resources 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.

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.

A Note to Teachers—Most lessons have a note from the author of the lesson. These are to encourage you and challenge you as you prepare for the lesson and pray for your students.

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 hands-on activities, 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. To properly view the slides, download the PowerPoint fonts from the Teacher Digital Resources and install them.

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 may include hands-on activities and videos. 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, and other lesson elements. These are included to assist you in planning and teaching the lesson.

Going Deeper—Teach this section of the lesson if you have a group of more mature students who are committed believers wanting to become better followers of Christ. The Scriptures and applications in this section might not be appropriate for seekers or those more on the fringes of the faith.

Activity—For each lesson there is an activity that is either done in small groups or individually. It may be a Bible study or a discussion. Students can find these in their Student Guides, or you may print them out from the Teacher Digital Resources.

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!

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Unit 1 Syllabus

Lesson 1	God's Word Is Our Foundation	Psalm 119:147; Hebrews 4:12; James 4:1-10
Lesson 2	Attributes of God	Isaiah 6:1-7; Revelation 4:1-11; Ephesians 1:15-23; Exodus 34:4-8, 32:1-14, 33:12-23; 1 John 4:7-21
Lesson 3	We Can Know God Exists	Genesis 1:1-2; Exodus 3:13-15; John 8:56-59; Romans 1:18-23; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Psalm 19:1-7; 1 Peter 3:15
Lesson 4	The Trinity	Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-5; Matthew 3:13-17; Colossians 3:1-3
Lesson 5	God's Word Guides Us	2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Genesis 2:7
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 18:15-22; John 12:44-50; Revelation 22:18-19
Lesson 9	The Gospel Is Good News	1 Corinthians 15:1-5; 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; 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

Psalms 119:147; Hebrews 4:12; James 4:1–10

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

A Note to Teachers

You know your students better than I do. You know, hopefully, how deep they need to go, and what they need to hear. I plead with you to do two things. First, be praying for these students throughout the week. They need godly adults in their lives to model the faith for them, and adults who are willing to believe in them and pass on the baton to them. Involve them, love them, pray for them, especially for their spiritual growth. Second, these lessons are by design meant for the teacher to spend some time with beforehand. They will not go near as well if you show up on Sunday morning having not read anything. My belief about teenagers is that they are so smart, and that most of them want to actually get into the meat of the Word. Sure, they need the basics, but they need them in ways that actually relate to their lives. Please spend time on these lessons to tweak them and make them a 'word on target' to your students. Spend time going over the answers to the questions, and even adapting some of the answers to better fit the spiritual needs of your group.



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

Come On In

Write on the board, "Why do you do the things that you do?" Have students make a short list for a later 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.

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

You are entering, or are already in, a critical stage in your life. A stage where you are learning who you are as a person, what you are passionate about in the world, and how you can make a genuine difference with your life. This curriculum will not teach you to be “the best you can be,” nor will it teach you to be independent. Instead, over the next several years, you will be learning about a perfect, wise, sovereign, and holy God who created and rules all things, and how He is glorified in your following and trusting in Him. You will learn not to rely on your own understanding of life, but to be dependent on and love the presence of God in your life as you seek to both know Him and be known by Him through His words to us.

A primary focus of these lessons will be on the original goodness of God’s creation, sin’s distortion of that goodness, and the ultimate redemption that is found in Jesus Christ. We will cover the breadth of God’s Word, going chronologically through the Bible. The lessons are meant to be intensely practical. Why you struggle with anger, why sex seems to be an addiction for you, why you struggle with depression, why you are a slave to fear—all of these situations will be discussed and found to have one common characteristic: sin in the human heart, a desire to rob God of the glory only due to Him, whether in thought, desire, motive, or deed.

Slides #1–3

- Write on the board, “Why do you do the things that you do?” Have students make a short list for discussion later in the lesson.
- Since this is the first lesson, you will be laying some groundwork for the lessons to come. These early lessons are intended to build a solid foundation on the authority of the Word of God.



Studying God’s Word

Walking in Truth

Our lessons will start with the concept of authority. It’s no secret that teenagers, and people in general for that matter, have a problem with authority. Nobody likes to be told what to do, or how to live their life. How many times have you heard someone say, “Don’t tell me what to do with my life!” In reality, I am convinced that deep down we all desire to be in control and rule our own lives. Sure, we love advice, and sometimes we like correction, but for someone to claim that they have the right to tell us what to do—that seems to be taking it too far. But not only does God have the right to tell us what to do, He also has the might to bring about His own purposes for His own glory.

As we will see next week, who God is as a being demands that He have the right to tell us what to do, what to believe, how to think, and how to spend our lives.

Psalm 119:147

Let’s jump into Psalm 119:147 and get some basics. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Slide #4

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

- ? Don't miss the beauty in the simplicity of this verse. Why do you think the psalmist (which is what we call the writer of the psalms when we don't know the author) would find it necessary to rise before dawn and cry for help? *Encourage answers that focus on how humans were made to be dependent on God, not independent from Him. The psalmist understood that he could not get through any day, and especially days in which he was in danger (see verse 150), on his own. He had to place his hope in the words of God to make it through the day.*

Humans were made for relationships, right? Ultimately, for a relationship with God, but also for relationships with other people. (Think of the two greatest commandments given by Jesus in Matthew 22:32–40. The commandments cannot be fulfilled apart from relationships).

Slide #5

- ? We sometimes thrive on the advice of those we respect, but how often do we purposefully set aside time, especially time in the morning before the busyness of the day begins, to pray and ask for help from the Lord? *If you have time, you can also look at Psalm 121:1–2 in regard to help coming from the Lord.*

When we get to the creation account, we will spend some time seeing how God made man perfect, but not complete. For now, realize that God did not create you to go through life and figure things out on your own. He made you to be dependent upon Him.

- ? Let's go back to the end of Psalm 119:147. Practically, what does it mean to hope in God's words? Can you give an example of a time when hoping in God's words has brought you comfort? *Encourage responses! Let them know that it does not have to be an incredibly dynamic response. If they do not have any, give them an example from your life when God's words have brought you hope, healing, or comfort.*

Going Deeper

Think about what the psalmist is saying in Psalm 119. He finds hope in the words (plural) of God. Do you imagine that many people back then had copies of God's Word lying around? In reality, not many people did. They relied heavily on hearing and remembering the words of God. Many followers of God in that time would have large sections of Scripture memorized. God even commanded them to take extreme measures to avoid forgetting His words (see Deuteronomy 6:4–9).

Can you imagine walking into someone's home today and seeing Scripture carved into their walls? All because they were terrified that they would forget about God? That seems on some levels insane, and on others pretty intense, almost intimidating even. But, God also taught that man cannot live on bread (food) alone, but on every word that comes from Him (Deuteronomy 8:1–3; Matthew 4:4). What if we actually took that seriously? What if we learned to crave God's Word as much, or more, than we crave food! Unfortunately, we truly are prone to wander away from God every chance we can, and we have to make sure that we are spending time getting to know the very words of God.

- Teach the Going Deeper section of the lessons if you have a group of more mature students who are committed believers wanting to become better followers of Christ. The Scriptures and applications in this section might not be appropriate for seekers or those more on the fringes of the faith.

Discover the Truth

As we progress through these lessons, one thing that will come to the forefront is the fact that all human beings are interpreters—interpreters of Scripture, events, culture, politics, economic trends, human motives, so forth and so on—all the way to being interpreters of life itself. Since God created and governs all things, He is the original interpreter of creation, the one who understands the world in all its complexity. The psalmist understood this, and in light of it was not willing to trust his own interpretation of life. He had the humility to rely on the Lord, and to ask for His help in living out his life of faith.

Getting to the Heart

Now let's begin to get to some heart issues.

Hebrews 4:12

 Slide #6

Let's read Hebrews 4:12 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Let's take this apart. I know it's right there, but what words are used to describe the Word of God? *Living (or alive), active (or effective or powerful), sharper, piercing (or penetrating).*

? Now let's tackle a couple of these. What does it mean that God's Word is living and active? *Theological perfection is not the goal. Encourage the students to give their thoughts, and help guide them in the right direction if they are off. But, do not shoot them down with a "that's wrong." That will inhibit further discussion from them. For God's word to be living and active could mean many things and have many applications. Encourage discussion.*

? The Greek word that is translated "active" is the word *energes*. What English word does that look like? *Energy.*

 Slide #7

This paints the idea that the word of God is "at work," or "effective." It's doing something! It's not just sitting there to be read for no reason. The book of James says that anyone who hears or reads Scripture without actually doing anything about what it says is deceiving themselves (James 1:22)! We will come back to this in a bit.

? What does it mean that the Word of God is able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart? *God's Word is revealing. Scripture is seen by theologians as God's "revelation" to us of Himself, but it is also God's revelation to us of ourselves. It acts as a mirror, showing us the sin rooted deep in our own hearts. Encourage discussion of how sin relates to our motives, thoughts, and desires, and not just behaviors.*

? Can you give an example of a time when Scripture pierced to your heart and revealed something about yourself that you did not realize until then? *If they can't, try to have an example prepared from your life.*

? As you came in, I asked you why you do the things that you do. What are some of the answers you wrote down or thought of? *Answers will vary but will likely focus on blaming situations/circumstances (because I was/went/did... I did...), environment (because I live/grew up... I now...), other people (because they did... I did...) past experience (because I was... now I...), etc. The goal is not to downplay the significance of past experiences, etc., but to prime the pump and teach them that the Bible takes a different approach, i.e., it attributes why we do what we do to the heart.*

This is a sticky question, right? Psychology, pop culture, high school education, friends, and even parents could all give different answers to that question. Our point right now is not to get into all the detail, as we will later, but to learn that when you ask the Bible, “why do people do the things they do,” the answer will come back to the heart. Talking about the heart, Jesus said, “Where your treasure [i.e., something that you seek to have; in this context it is mainly referring to money] is, there your heart will be also.” Everyone seeks some kind of treasure, whether it is sex, money, power, control, respect, Jesus, etc. Your treasure will control your heart, and whatever controls your heart will ultimately control your behavior.

A reason we desperately need Scripture is because it pierces our hearts and examines our intentions of how we are living. It pulls us out of our selfish lifestyle and challenges us to live a better life serving the Lord Himself. That is why 1 Peter 2 talks about longing for the Word of God as an infant longs for food, “that by it you may grow up into salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). We cannot get through life on our own. Our motives will be flawed, and everything we do will be self-serving. Scripture calls us to turn to God and praise Him for changing our desires and motives.

Going Deeper

Several places in Scripture talk about how God uses His Word and what it accomplishes. Let’s take a look at some of these and discuss how they show that the Word of God is truly “living.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13 aloud and discuss. What would it look like for the Word of God to be at work in a believer? If there is time, cover harder situations such as how the God’s Word can be at work in a believer when he/she is going through a trial such as being rejected for a part in a play or sports team, dealing with gossip from other students, heightened pressure to have sex. You could also get into how the Word can help a believer trapped in sin, such as addiction to pornography, bitterness toward another student, etc.

2 Timothy 3:12–15

Read 2 Timothy 3:12–15 aloud and discuss. Although not necessary, you could relate the last discussion on suffering and dealing with trials to the fact that a believer, by his or her very nature, will suffer in this world.

Read James 1:18 aloud and discuss. Ask for some examples of how the Word of God has been used to change people's lives.

Discover the Truth

When you approach Scripture, what goes through your head? Does the reality that you are approaching and hearing from the almighty and holy God of the universe strike you? God is living, and His word is living. We should not approach Scripture as if it were some self-help book that didn't actually have any power. God's word is active; it is at work. In the next lesson we will touch on the fact that even God's speech is a part of who He is, and His speech accomplishes what He intends. By His very word, He brought the world into existence.



What Is God's Word?

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. 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).

 Slides #13–16

- ? 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.*

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 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. God's Word does not act as an encyclopedia, though. We should not approach it as we would when seeking advice from a friend or relative. The Word is a divine drama telling about God's dealings with His creation. In this way, we approach it with respect, reverence, and joy that He would choose to communicate with us in a means that we can comprehend.



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 meant to teach us about God, and to teach us about ourselves. We should be utterly dependent on the truth that God communicates.*
- ? **Psalm 119:147 tells of a man who wakes before dawn to pray to God and who hopes in God's words. On a practical level, how can we imitate that and find the time to spend with the Lord, asking for help and hearing from Him?** *Challenge them to cut out things in their lives that may distract them from spending time with God. Tell how you are able to stay focused on God, even though you likely work and have a family. Urge them to set up a specific time to get alone with God as often as they can.*
- ? **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.*
- ? **In light of that, how can we help one another live under the authority of God's Word?** *Hear them out. Teenagers often have great ideas on how to follow Christ and learn from Him.*

God's Word in the Real World

Now that we have seen some practical sides of the Bible, let's get back to the heart. Let's discuss how the Word of God can be intensely practical to our lives.

Do you have any conflict in your life? Odds are, you do. Whether it's moments of irritation toward someone you otherwise love, that other student who always critiques you or talks bad about you for no reason, or arguments over who is in charge on a team, conflict is all around us. Conflict is a principal effect of sin in our world. Whereas the world

teaches us to blame conflict on anything but ourselves, Scripture teaches that conflict can actually be a very illuminating window into our hearts.

James 4:1–10

🖥 Slides #17–21

Listen to James 4:1–10. *Read aloud.*

James grabs our attention because he not only addresses an issue in all of our lives, but he explains why it is there. In a culture that tells us to chase after all our desires, James seems to be saying something quite different.

- ❓ **How do your desires affect you?** *This may be a tougher question, but try to show them that our desires can provide our motivation for everything in life. If I have a desire to be married and have a nice job, odds are I will do whatever I can to reach those goals. Relate it back to our faith; if someone desires to live a godly life, then they will be motivated and disciplined to spend time with the Lord and learn from Him.*

🖥 Slides #22–24

Notice the phrase, “your passions are at war within you.” James explains that fights and conflicts happen because while person A is seeking desire A, person B is seeking desire B, so a conflict arises over whose desire will prevail. Sometimes these conflicts can be good and necessary, but sometimes they can lead to outbursts of anger and wrath.

The point is that the heart of every person is a fount of competing desires. In your hearts every day there is a battle for control. Will you serve God and surrender control to Him and allow His desires for you to direct your paths? Or will you give in to other desires, and end up in conflict with the Lord and with other people, all because you will not give up what you want in exchange for something better that the Lord wants? If your desire is always only to set up your own kingdom and make yourself king, then you will always be in conflict with anyone who opposes your kingdom, and especially with the Lord who claims unconquerable kingship.

- ❓ **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.*
- ❓ **Do you recognize any areas in your life where you are not looking to God’s Word as the absolute authority? What about areas where you have refused to give up control, and conflict has arisen because of that? 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).*

Throughout the week, keep James 4 in your hearts. Meditate on it and examine yourselves. Look for areas in your life where you are desiring to be on the throne and in control. Pray for help to respond biblically in those areas, and to deal with conflict with humility and submission to the Lord.



Group Prayer Time

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

- Praise God for His unchanging character.
- Ask God to help each person to trust in and rely on His perfect Word.
- 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

Isaiah 6:1-7; Revelation 4:1-11; Ephesians 1:15-23; Exodus 34:4-8, 32:1-14, 33:12-23; 1 John 4:7-21

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

A Note to Teachers

A.W. Tozer in his *The Knowledge of the Holy* said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” This truth resonates deeply with our particular North American cultural context. All around there are people who believe thousands of different things about God. While they have no justification for why they believe whatever they want about God, they tend to vehemently defend their beliefs. It is crucial that your students are being taught to focus on God as He reveals Himself in Scripture. It is not uncommon anymore to hear things like, “I feel like God wouldn’t judge sin or have any kind of wrath,” or, “I think God just loves the world as it is. He doesn’t expect us to change since He made us like this,” etc. It goes without saying, but how we view God in every aspect will have an immensely practical outworking in our lives. Your students will handle temptation, suffering, bullying, family issues, and personal crises differently depending on what they think about God. As their teacher and model, hold 1 Corinthians 11:1 close. You should model Christ in such a way that they will be unashamed to model you. How you allow your theology to practically work in your life will be an example to them. Pray for them, love them deeply, and do not lose heart.



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

Come On In

Students will discuss what they think God is like. Write, “When you think of God, what comes to your mind?” 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.

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

During the last lesson we laid a foundation of our dependence on the Word of God. His Word penetrates our hearts and discerns our thoughts, motives, desires, attitudes, and behaviors. Not only that, but Scripture also acts as a mirror for us to examine our lives and the world around us. This way of viewing the world around us constitutes what is called our *worldview*. A worldview has been likened to a pair of glasses that we see the world through—glasses that color and shape everything from meaning we interpret from events and words, to why we behave differently in certain situations than, say, a woman from Southeast Asia or a man from North Africa would.

Our worldview also encompasses our assumptions and values about the world around us. Where it gets tricky is when you try to discern the assumptions and values you hold based off Scripture, and ones you hold based off the culture that you have grown up in. A very basic example would be ice. Would you consider it weird if someone ordered a soft drink in the United States with no ice? You probably would. However, in India, the assumption is that soft drinks are to be had without ice, so it is considered weird if people order their drinks with ice. Of course that is a harmless example, but consider the ramifications our assumptions can have on how we interpret Scripture. For example, do you value individualism or collectivism? Independence or dependence? Odds are, because of your culture, you see individualism and independence as better. However, the culture in which Scripture was written saw dependence and collectivism as more valuable. This does not mean that we throw away our U.S. culture, but it does mean that we do not make assumptions as if God likes and wants us to be independent. In reality, He wants us totally dependent on Him and His Word. We cannot assume that Scripture sees life through the lens of a twenty-first century U.S. citizen. Instead, we must view our culture through the lens of Scripture.

Thus, we are in a constant battle in our lives to bring every thought captive to Christ (see 2 Corinthians 10:4–6). Part of this battle is to bring every assumption we make and values we have about the world and the people in the world under the influence and guidance of Scripture. Although the Bible is not a topical handbook on how to live, it does speak to ethical and philosophical principles that guide our underlying assumptions, values, and ultimately our day-to-day decision making in life.

- ? What are some other assumptions, or values, that you have that may go against the grain of Scripture? *This is a hard question for anyone, especially high school students. It may take some time of thinking and introspection. Here are a few suggestions to help the conversation move along: the value of money, and the assumption that more money is better than less money. The value of status, and the assumption that God is working more in someone's life when they are blessed materially. The value of power, and the assumption that God will help*

- Write, “When you think of God, what comes to your mind?” on the board. Encourage people to discuss this idea as they wait for the lesson to begin.

📄 Slides #1–3

those who help themselves. The value of education, and the assumption that God can only use those with Bible college/seminary degrees. The value of standing out, and the assumption that God wants everyone to do something that no one else has done with their lives.

- ?** Why is Scripture the best lens to view the world through? Encourage discussion, and don't shy away from difficult questions. God, as creator of the universe, is the only one in the position to rightly understand and interpret the world. God has the ultimate viewpoint of the world—the broadest, deepest understanding of it. His Word, therefore, about Himself or about the world, is more credible than any other word and any other means of knowing.

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



Studying God's Word

The Holiness of God

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.

Isaiah 6:1–7

Let's read Isaiah 6:1–7 together. This is one of the most humbling passages in Scripture, and some of the closest we come to understanding the nature of God, so let us approach this with humility. *Have someone read the passage aloud as others follow along. Remind the students they can take notes in their Student Guides. Something fun is to have everyone close their eyes and imagine the scene playing out, especially as it describes the Lord.*

Isn't that crazy? Let's dig into this a little bit. When you study the Bible, something that is always helpful is to read it at least once with a focus totally on God, whether it be what He is saying/doing, why He is saying/doing it, or how He is described.

- ?** In this passage, how is God described? *He is sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. The train of His robe filled the temple.*
- ?** How might you feel if you were seeing this unfold. Would your reaction match up with Isaiah's? *Allow discussion.*
- ?** The seraphim were angelic beings that worshiped God day and night. Why do you think they were covering their faces and feet? *Allow discussion. The point is that even a perfect, superhuman creature humbles itself before the Lord of all. They would not even look upon God in all of His glory.*
- ?** Catch this reality. There are these beings, seraphim, whose main purpose is to worship God. It comes naturally that what they are saying and how they are worshiping God should prove to be important. So, what are they saying? *Holy, holy, holy.*
- ?** That is big. In fact, God's holiness is His only character quality that is repeated three times in a row in all of Scripture. This leads us to the question, what is holiness? What does it mean to be holy? *Allow discussion.*

 Slides #4–7

Odds are, even though the word isn't used in our culture much outside of church, they know what holiness is. To be holy means to be set apart. Traditionally, theologians have noted the holiness of God in two categories: ethics and ontology. God is ethically holy because He is without any sin or imperfections. He is pure and unlike all others. He is even unlike holy angels in the fact that He sets the ethics of all history. Unlike the angels who worship the Lord without sin, God Himself has defined what it means to be without sin. Ontology is the philosophical study of being, so for God to be ontologically holy means that He is totally "other." He is unmatched in all wisdom, power, justice, love, etc. As He claims in the Old Testament, there is no God like Him.

Notice Isaiah's response to standing in the presence of this holy God. He says, "Woe is me! for I am lost." If we were to say that in our modern language, it would be something like, "I am ruined. You are going to kill me." It's notable that until this point, six chapters in, Isaiah has said nothing in this book. His first words are of contrite humility, recognizing his place before the King of the universe. Isaiah recognizes his own sin and his own inadequacy of being in the presence of the Lord.

- ? With this in mind, what is striking about this passage? *Students may say many things that are good, but try to guide them to the fact that even where God's holiness is present, His grace is there, too.*

If you had to define God in one word, as hard as that is, holiness is likely the word that would hit the most of who He is. We live in a church culture that tries to elevate God's love above everything else. We run into many problems when we try to pit God's attributes against each other and elevate some and deflate others, as if God is only thirty percent holy and seventy percent love. The argument looks appealing and is presented in a way that steers away from anything scary or offensive to people. The problem is, how does God's wrath fit in if love is His overarching attribute? When holiness is understood as integral to who God is, it makes sense that He must judge sin. It makes sense that He would pour out wrath against something that is the opposite of His nature. Furthermore, every other attribute is more rightly understood in the light of His holiness. God's love, while similar to ours, is also different. It is holy love, a love that we can never fully comprehend. Imagine the implications of this for those whom God calls His children! As much as you love someone on earth, God's love is infinitely more comprehensive.

Going Deeper

Isaiah 6:1 mentions the throne that the Lord was sitting on.

Revelation 4:1–11

 Slides #8–14

Let's read Revelation 4:1–11 and count how many times the word "throne" is used. *Read the passage.*

- ? How many times is that word "throne" used in reference to the throne of God? *12 times.*

- ? With the throne of God clearly being a theme in this chapter, what can the application be? What does a throne represent? How can this bring comfort to people? *Encourage responses that focus on the sovereignty and holiness of God. The throne of God represents His utmost sovereignty over His creation. This can bring comfort as we watch person after person try to assert themselves onto the throne in the world. We can stand firm that God is on the throne of all thrones.*

🖥 Slides #15–18

Ephesians 1:15–23

Someone read Ephesians 1:15–23.

- ? How does this passage relate to what we have been talking about? *This is one of many passages that shows the supremacy of Christ. Christ is our only access to God, and His life on earth is a model for us today.*

Discover the Truth

After man rebelled against the supreme authority of God, God had—and still has—every right to separate Himself from us for all of eternity. We live in an era where forgiveness of sins is proclaimed through Jesus Christ, and that is a glorious and satisfying truth. However, while God chose to show grace to sinners, this does not undermine His holiness. God’s holiness necessitated the death of His perfect Son on a cross, so that rebellious people like you and me could be reconciled to God and be pure in His eyes, all for His own glory. Make no mistake, no other sacrifice could have been made. Only a perfect sacrifice could satisfy God’s wrath against sin. Had one of us offered to be a sacrifice, we would have been justly killed and separated from God for all eternity. The holiness of God, while providing comfort in many cases, should also be a source of awe in us toward God. He is not one that we can play games with, as He must punish sin by His very nature. When we turn to Christ, put our faith in Him alone for our salvation, and by His grace repent of our sins, Scripture says that we are given the righteousness of Christ, meaning that when the holy God of the universe looks upon you, He does not see your sin, your rebellion, or anything tainted in you. Instead, He sees the perfect righteousness and holiness of His own Son, who through the Cross defeated death and rose again so that we might believe in Him, live for Him, and be called children of God

God’s Name to Moses

Let’s read Exodus 34:4–8 together.

🖥 Slides #19–20

Exodus 34:4–8

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.*

- ? **How is God described in this passage?** *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. Ask the students what these attributes mean, and help work through them.*

This passage by itself is beautiful. However, it is even better when you consider the context it was written in. Let's look at two contextual items that add meaning to this passage.

Exodus 32:1–14

 Slides #21–29

First, someone read Exodus 32:1–14. *Assign a reader.*

Isn't it unbelievable? As we will see many weeks from now, God delivered His people from Egypt, and yet Aaron says that the golden calf are the gods who delivered them from Egypt!

- ? **In light of this passage, and in light of our discussion on the holiness of God, what is amazing about what God says in Exodus 34?** *God is slow to anger. The fact that He could still show grace to these people after their rebellion against Him is amazing.*

Exodus 33:12–23

 Slides #30–35

Next, someone read Exodus 33:12–23. *Assign a reader.*

Notice that in verse 18 Moses asks God to show him His glory. Then in verse 19 the Lord replies, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’” So, God says that He will proclaim His name to Moses.

- ? **Jump ahead to Exodus 34:6–7 where the Lord does this. Why may it be significant that God does not just describe Himself, but proclaims His name to Moses?** *The point that you should try to guide the students toward is that God's attributes are not something outside of Him. He is not fickle, and will not change Himself. When He gives His name, of course it is not a normal name like a person has today, but instead it is something about Him that is integral to His character and being.*

Going Deeper

In Exodus 3:13–15, much before the passage we just read, Moses asks for God's name so that he can tell the people of Israel. The Lord's answer is unique. Although we will spend more time with it when we get to Exodus 3, most people agree that God's answer was either, “I am who I am,” or, “I will be who I will be.” Either way works with the original language, and people argue over which one is more correct. Regardless, for God to say that His name is “I am,” or “I will be,” is to make a statement, at least partially, of His faithfulness and presence. God had previously said to Moses, and continued to say to His people, “I will be with you.” Furthermore, God tells Moses to say to the Israelites that “the God of your fathers” had sent him. His point was to remind the people of Israel that the same God who was with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

(i.e., “your fathers”) is the same God who will be with them as they are rescued from Egypt. As God’s children, we are to have no fear of man, because we know that the God of all is present with us.

God’s presence is a part of who He is, and it is a major theme that runs through all of Scripture. God was present in the garden with Adam and Eve; He pursued His people to be present with them even after they rebelled against Him. He constantly said, “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” God’s presence was manifested on earth in the Old Testament in the Tabernacle (which essentially mean, “the dwelling place of God), and later in the Temple in Jerusalem. When Jesus came to earth, John says that He “dwelt among us.” (John 1:14.) If you read it in the original language, the word for “dwelt” meant, “to fix one’s tabernacle” or “to pitch a tent.” So it could read, “He tabernacled among us.” In Christ was the fullness of God (Colossians 2:9). As the church was born, the New Testament testifies that a believer’s body is indwelt by the presence of God. Instead of a physical temple in Jerusalem, the church (a people, not a building) becomes the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19–20).

- ? What other applications can you discern from how God chooses to name Himself? *Encourage discussion.*

Supplemental Discussion

It is possible that someone may ask about Exodus 34:7. Many people wonder, “Will God really punish me for the sins of my father or grandfathers?” It is a fair question, and this material has been provided in case someone asks, or is confused if you ask about it.

The easiest answer is found in Ezekiel 18. It explains that just because you are the child of someone who sinned, it does not mean that you will automatically be punished. Yes, you may have to live with the consequences of your father’s sins, but if you follow the path of the righteous, then you will not suffer eternally for your father’s sins. Exodus 20:5–6 and Deuteronomy 5:8–10 qualify this teaching by saying that the iniquity will be on the generations of those who hate God. For those who love God, His steadfast love will be on them.

There is, however, a more communal element of the consequences of sin in Scripture that is largely ignored today. Examples include Achan’s sin in Joshua 7, and passages like Galatians 5:7–9. This is one reason that sin in the church must be addressed, and therefore a reason for passages that discuss church discipline.

Discover the Truth

It is not too hard to understand that God is kind, slow to anger, and patient. But, it is easy for us to presume upon these things and act like God does not care about our sin. In fact, this was the exact situation being addressed in Romans 2. Verse 4 says, “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” As we read and hear about these attributes of God, let them lead you to turn from

trusting in yourself, and cause you to trust in His sovereign kindness and mercy toward you as a sinful being.

The Love of God

I want us to read one more passage that speaks of who God is.

1 John 4:7–21

 Slides #36–41

Let's read 1 John 4:7–21 together and look at another revelation of God's character. *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 passages 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 convince someone that true love in a relationship will cast out any fear of it not working out. When interpreted in context, it means that 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 is the audience of this text?** *No specific body of believers is identified, 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), and loving our brother (v. 21).*

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

- ?** **What are some ideas as to what it means that God is love?** *Many things could be mentioned. One way to answer this question is to look at 1 Corinthians 13 where love is defined. To say God is love is to say that God is all of those qualities of love mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13.*
- ?** **Why would God love people like us, sinful and messed up people?** *This can be a tough question for a lot of people. A common pat answer is to say that because God is love, it is in His nature to love us. While this answer is true, it is also in God's nature to judge sin and pour out His wrath against people who oppose Him, which Scripture teaches is everyone before the Lord changes their hearts. Another problem with this answer, especially for teenagers, is that they can get the impression that God only loves them because He has to, not because He*

wants to. Perhaps the best answer is that God loves us because it brings Him great glory, and it brings us great joy. God cares about His creation deeply, and He has made His people to glorify Him (Isaiah 43:1–7). The Lord has chosen to set His love on sinners, and He loves us like a parent loves his or her child, like a husband loves his bride, in spite of our flaws, with the power to change us and make us pure in His sight, all for His own glory.

Going Deeper

- ?** So, who does God love more: Himself or us? Allow some discussion. Most students, and people in general, will end up deciding that God loves us more. It is the purpose in this section to show why this thinking is flawed and self-centered.

This is a tricky question. Beyond a doubt, God loves us. He gave Himself for us. But, how can God love something more than Himself? It would amount to idolatry for the Lord to put anyone before Himself. Many people take offense at this, as if God loving Himself most makes Him out to be a self-centered and uncaring God. But, what if God's supreme love for Himself was actually the foundation for His love for us? God loves to be glorified, and He chose to be glorified by changing the hearts of sinners and saving them based on no merit of their own.

If you have time, have the students read and discuss these passages:

- **Isaiah 42:8, 48:9–11** *Why can't God share His glory? That would be akin to idolatry.*
- **Ezekiel 36:22–36** *Here God claims that He was not going to save Israel for their own sake, but for the sake of His holy name.*
- **1 John 2:12** *Our sins have been forgiven for His name's sake.*

Discover the Truth

Christ's love for us is deep. He gave Himself for us so that we might glorify Him with our lives. He was not forced to die for the sins of the world, but in order that His name might be made great among the nations, He suffered on the Cross, gives His Spirit to those who believe in Him, and adopts us into His family, all for our joy and His glory.



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.

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. I hope that we all will 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

If you have time, look at a simple case study showing the impact of one of God's attributes—His sovereignty. Have the class read these passages and look for a common theme.

- **Isaiah 6:8–13** Here God is speaking to Isaiah.
- **Jeremiah 7:16–27** Jumping into the middle of a passage is always difficult. Here God is talking to Jeremiah. Focus on the fact that God tells him to go and speak to the people, but that they will not listen.
- **Ezekiel 3:4–7** Here God is speaking to Ezekiel.

- ?** **What was the common theme that you saw?** God said essentially the same thing to all three prophets: that He was going to send them to speak His Word, but that the people would not listen.
- ?** **What applications do you think we can make from this?** There could be many; here are a couple. Sometimes we have a mindset that thinks God is going to abundantly bless everything we do. Even worse, we put in our heads what we think that blessing should look like, and we end up disappointed when it does not work out the way we wanted. Here is an example of three of the biggest prophets

 Slides #42–44

in the OT that God used, in spite of the fact that they weren't very "successful" at getting the people to turn back to God. They could have asked, "Why, God? Isn't this a waste of time? Couldn't we be doing something more productive?" However, they did not argue with God. They knew He called them to the task of sharing His Word, and they did not shrink back from doing that. This leads into a second application. In a world where everyone is asking, "What is God's will for my life?" we must be very careful that we do not try to run our own lives, set our own goals, and chase our own desires. Sometimes what God calls us to will not make sense. Sometimes we may not even know what He is calling us to until we have been through many things that we learn He's not calling us to. We all have giftings that are meant to be used to glorify God, but will we trust Him with what He has given?

- ?** **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. God made us in His image, to worship Him. We must be careful that we do not make God into our image and force Him to worship us.*
- ?** **How do you see the attributes of God questioned by those in your school or workplace? How can you respond to these questions?** *What different views of God have they encountered? Encourage them to start asking their friends and family what they think about when they think about God. Who is God to them?*



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 8:24, 8:56–59; Romans 1:18–23; Psalm 19:1–4

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?”

Activity: *Worldly Wisdom*

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

Student Guides

Optional Supplements

Video Clips

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

- 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

Have the students discuss the question, “How do we prove God exists?” There may be some of them that assume the existence of God can be proven, and others claiming that to prove His existence is impossible. Discuss potential flaws to both approaches.

► Write on the board, “How do we prove God exists?” Have students discuss this question.

- ❓ Last week, we talked about God’s attributes. Who remembers what we discussed? *Allow discussion.*
- ❓ What were some of God’s attributes we mentioned? *Allow discussion.*
- ❓ What did we say is God’s main attribute—the one that ties all the others together? *Holiness.*

🖥️ Slides #1–3



Studying God’s Word

God Is Eternal

We are going to turn to the Word and see what it says about the existence of God. The reason we are starting with Scripture is to show that it is our highest authority, not human reasoning. This does not mean that we blindly follow it and believe it for no reason. We see its truthfulness because of its internal integrity and honesty about how the world is, and we trust that it truly was written by the Lord Himself. It is fantastic to know that science and the natural world point back to God, but if we take away Scripture as our authority in these matters, then we will be left with our own wisdom, which both Scripture and the world attest is faulty and selfish.

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

Genesis 1:1–2

🖥️ Slide #4

Let’s read Genesis 1:1–2. *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 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.*
- ❓ The Bible starts out with the assumption that God exists. Is it fair for us today to start out with the same assumption? *This is a tricky question,*

and the point is to get them thinking about how their presuppositions can affect their thinking about and witnessing of the gospel. Christians are divided over this question, and clearly the Lord has used people who believe that we should start with the assumption of God, and He has used people that believe we should start with some sort of philosophy. Although there can be benefits to both approaches, it seems that the temptation when starting without the presupposition that God exists is to rely too much on human wisdom and argumentation, rather than the power and Spirit of God. Of course, if someone wants to discuss the possibility of God with you, it would not be wise to bash them over the head with a Bible and call them ignorant for questioning what the Bible says. The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14), and we should not expect them to by their own wisdom.

 Slides #5–6

Exodus 3:13–15

Let's turn to Exodus 3 and read verses 13–15 together. Have someone read the passage aloud.

? What name does God declare to Moses? *I AM WHO I AM. I AM.*

If you remember last week, we touched on the fact that the Hebrew here could be “I am who I am,” or “I will be who I will be,” and how God’s naming of Himself pointed partly back to His faithfulness and presence with His people. This week we are going to look at the other, and more prominent, meaning of His name.

? First, let's get your thoughts. What do you think God intended to communicate with this name? *There could be a few different answers, as we saw last week. This week, point them to the fact that He is the self-existent and eternal God. By saying “I am who I am,” He is making a claim that nobody can challenge His authority and power, because He has existed from all eternity and has always been and will always be the King of the universe.*

 Slide #7

John 8:24

Now let's jump forward to John 8. Here, Jesus is talking to a group of Jews who were questioning His teachings. He said to them in verse 24, “if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.” *Translations add the word “He” after I am. In the Greek, it does not say “I am He,” it just says “I am.”*

? Do you recognize the “I am”? What was Jesus trying to say? *He was claiming equality with God.*

 Slides #8–9

John 8:56–59

Immediately after He says this, the Jews ask who He is, because they realize that He is attempting to equate Himself with God. Jesus uses the same phrase again in verses 28 and 58. Let's take a look at the last one. Have someone read John 8:56–59. Jesus is talking to the same group of Jews still. It helps to realize that the Jews saw Abraham as their spiritual father. They believed that just because they were physical descendants of Abraham, God must love them.

Did you catch verse 58? The Greek phrase for “I am” is *ego eimi* (rhymes with “lego hey me”). The unusual thing about the phrase is that *ego* was the Greek word for “I” and *eimi* was the Greek word that meant “I am.” So rather than just saying *eimi*, Jesus emphatically said *ego eimi*, making a point that He was claiming the same name that God Himself claimed in places like Exodus 3:14, Deuteronomy 32:39, and Isaiah 43:10.

Slide #10

- ? Why did the Jews react the way they did in verse 59? *Because they understood what Jesus was claiming about Himself, and they did not believe it. It was a serious offense to them for any man to claim equality with God, an offense punishable by death according to their own law (Leviticus 24:16).*

Discover the Truth

That God is an eternal being almost goes without saying. However, don't miss the implications of this truth. Here is an analogy that you might have lived through. Imagine that you are sixteen and you have a seven-year-old brother. One day, your brother tries to argue with you about something that you have more experience with, and something that you know he is wrong on. You might say to him, “Stop arguing with me, you're only seven!” Now, take this and apply it to when we resist God and try to turn to our own wisdom. Can you imagine God saying, “Stop arguing with me, you're only 90!” God is the Creator, the King, the Victor, and the wisest Being to ever exist in the universe.

Aseity is the term that is used to describe God as self-existing. It comes from the Latin phrase *a se*, which means “from or by self.” The point is that the eternal, self-existing God is independent in everything: in His existence, His perfections, His decrees, His works, and anything else you can think of. This is the God that we worship and serve!

Slide #11

The World's Knowledge of God

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.

Romans 1:18–23

We are going to look next at a passage that will help us directly answer the question about how we know God exists. Turn to Romans 1 and let's read verses 18–23 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Slides #12–15

- ? 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.*
- ? **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. Ask the students for examples of modern-day idols. Examples could be money, cars, houses, comfort, security, children, spouses, buildings, jobs, churches, etc.*
- ? **Why did the people professing to be wise become fools?** *Because in their so-called wisdom, they exchanged the greatest wisdom and glory of all, God, for their own satisfactions.*

 Slide #16–17

Psalm 19:1–4

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

Going Deeper

- ? **What is the essence of sin?** *This is a difficult question, and surely sin exemplifies itself differently in different people and situations. The point, though, is to see that most students will probably bring the root of sin back to moral-behavioral issues, i.e. “the root of sin is disobedience.” The point here is to show that while behavior plays a huge role in sin, there is something much deeper going on—a robbing of God's glory.*

Notice how Romans 1:23 talks about people who exchanged the glory of God for something less worthy. Although we are accustomed to talking about sin in moral-behavioral categories, it is important to understand that at the essence of sin is idolatry, or stealing glory from God. God expresses His love for His own glory in Isaiah (see 42:8, 48:11), and the fact that He will not share His glory with another. Romans 3:23 says that everyone has fallen short of the glory of God. Notice that it does not say we have disobeyed God (even though Romans 1–3 makes it clear that we have), but that we have fallen short of His glory. When we glory in anything besides God, sin is present. When we find more satisfaction in anything than we do than in God, sin is present. The application of this fact is that sin can be present in thoughts, motives, attitudes, desires, and a host of other things besides simple behavior.

Discover the Truth

Despite the claims of many who deny they believe in God, everyone knows that He exists. These texts make it clear that people know there is a divine Creator, but many of them 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 that 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.

 Slides #18–19

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

🖥 Slides #20–30

- ❓ **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.*

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

- ❓ **If someone asks you how you know God exists, how would you respond?** *Some students will probably say they would start with the Bible. However, you can expect some, if not many, students to say, "But what if the person will not listen to the Bible?" This is a valid concern, but we must always consider the Bible to be our ultimate authority. If we put evidence before Scripture, the evidence becomes the authority.*
- ❓ **What is the proper role of evidence in our apologetics?** *Many Christians feel compelled to use the argument from design; the idea that if we find a complex object, such as a watch, it must have been created by a designer. Others may mention probability arguments concerning the extreme odds against a "simple" cell evolving by chance. While these ideas are compelling to some, they cannot*

prove God's existence or cause someone to believe in Him. They can, however, be used to confirm what the Bible says about God and His creation. This is where many Christians err when attempting to defend their faith. They place too heavy an emphasis on scientific information, and they leave Scripture out of the discussion until a positive response is elicited from the evidence. Or worse, Scripture is left out altogether.

Romans 1:20

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

Psalms 19:1–7

- ?** **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 revives, or 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 are missing, the entire process fails. Hemophilia is an example of a disorder where one or more of these interdependent parts is 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.*

1 Peter 3:15

Some people will use 1 Peter 3:15 to argue that we should always be ready to give good arguments for Christ. These well-meaning people will say, "This verse tells us to always be ready to give a defense of the faith." The problem with this interpretation is two-fold. First, the verse tells us to be prepared to make a defense when people ask us for the reason we

have hope. This word defense is probably better translated as “account.” We are to give an account of why we have hope. Second, in context, this passage is talking about having hope during a time of trial and suffering. The idea is that if we call ourselves Christians and have hope in the Lord, even when we are going through major trials, people will naturally start to ask us why we still have hope.

- ❓ Think about it, what is the reaction of most people when they go through trials, especially through ones that aren’t their fault? *People usually complain, get bitter, gossip, or try to take control through anger, argumentation, and other sinful tactics.*

Now, imagine with me a group of believers who are going through very hard struggles, and yet they don’t complain, they don’t blame God or make excuses, and instead they hold on to the hope that only God can give. When the church lives like this, people will start to ask questions. They will be intrigued. I believe that our lives and how we handle trials will be more of an apologetic to Christ than any earthly argument we can come up with. I do not know a single person that has been argued to faith in Christ. But I know many who had their hearts changed by God by seeing the testimony of believers who had faith and hope in Christ through dark trials. We plant gospel seeds, and God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:5–9).



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; John 1:1–5; Matthew 3:13–17; Colossians 3:1–3

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

A Note to Teachers

The Trinity is one of the most unusual, and difficult, subjects to grasp fully. Recently, there has been much literature moving away from the theoretical aspect of Trinitarian theology and going more toward the practical applications of this doctrine. It would be a wise thing to always keep this in focus while teaching this lesson. Be careful not to present Scripture as a collection of doctrines and give your students the impression that our theoretical beliefs overshadow the way we live. Clearly, beliefs are important, and they definitely impact how we live. However, there is often a disconnect between peoples' confessional theology (what they say they believe) and their functional theology (what they show they really believe). For example, many people believe in the sovereignty and goodness of God, at least until their lives spiral out of control, then they do everything in their power to make sure they are in control and comfortable. It is hard for us to let go of the ropes and trust that God knows what He's doing. In this lesson, it's important to model a connection between your confessional theology and functional theology. Strive to show them that even something as confusing as the Trinity can have real-life applications. The application at the end of the lesson will be on fear. What role has fear played in your life? How were you able to overcome that? What grace did the Lord provide to reveal your fears to you? Be thinking of some examples, and don't hesitate to share your shortcomings and failures to teenagers. They need to know that they are not alone in being afraid and experiencing feelings of failure. You can show them how the grace of God was with you even in your shortcomings and seeming failures. You can teach them that even something you viewed as a failure was used for the good and glory of God!



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

Come On In

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

Studying God's Word

Even though the word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible, it accurately explains the three-in-one (triune) nature of God as presented in Scripture.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Print one God Is Triune chart for each student. | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice cubes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Print one Trinity Diagram for your use. | <input type="checkbox"/> Water |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Small saucepan |

Activity: Trinitarian Heresies

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

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Print one Athanasian Creed and one Trinitarian Heresies sheet for each student. | <input type="checkbox"/> 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.

- 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?”

🖥️ Slide #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.

Genesis 1:1–3

We’re going to start with the beginning of Scripture, that way we can show that the teaching of a triune God runs all throughout the Bible, from beginning to end. 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

🖥️ Slide #4

passage gives us a glimpse into the Trinity, so let's examine the passage using some questions and tools that aim to make us 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.*
- ? What does the passage tell us about the nature of God? *God is the Creator, and there is a Spirit of God.*

Although in the past three lessons we have gotten used to the tactic of bringing many passages of Scripture together topically, we must be careful with this approach overall. Although it can be very beneficial to glean insights on a particular topic through many different Scriptures, we must avoid the temptation to rip texts out of their historical and literary contexts and make them answer questions that the original authors and readers were never asking. We will cover more on interpretation in future lessons, but for now it is imperative that we understand that if we string a bunch of verses together to answer a topical question, we must still be faithful to the original context of the texts; avoiding to do so results in something called proof-texting—a dangerous habit of throwing Bible verses around as if the Bible is a topical handbook speaking to our twenty-first century questions.

 Slides #5–6

John 1:1–5

With that in mind, we will not look at the original context of these next texts. However, it is incredibly clear that they can still speak to the topic of the Trinity, at least for our purposes today. What follows is one passage that gives insight about the Trinity in creation, and then some passages more on the general nature of the Trinity. First let's look at John 1:1–5. *Have someone read John 1:1–5.*

- ? How does John 1 illuminate Genesis 1:1–3? *Here we see Jesus' role in creation. John 1:14 identifies the word as Jesus. This is also seen in Colossians 1:16.*

Discover the Truth

Although we do not encounter the word *Trinity* anywhere in Scripture, 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.

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.

We will put our focus on one clear picture of the Trinity in the New Testament: the baptism of Jesus.

The Baptism of Jesus

Matthew 3:13–17

 Slides #7–8

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. Let's ask some questions of the text and gain a concrete understanding of what is going on here.

- ? 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.*
- ? 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. This doesn't necessarily prove the Trinity in relationship and unity with each other, but it does show the Personhood of each member of the Godhead.

Discover the Truth

Now that we have looked at this idea, let's make sure that we understand that no individual verse proves the way we interpret 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, and 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.

- 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 Athanasian Creed and 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 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. Interestingly, there is actually 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 if we are not careful.

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

Slide #9

- **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.

- ? 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).**

Before we pray and head out, I also want to discuss another practical application of the Trinity. We want to make sure that we do not take concepts like the Trinity and keep them in a theoretical world where no real difference is made in our lives. There are many great applications of the truth of the Trinity, but today we are going to look at how it can encourage our security as believers. Let’s take a look at a few verses and truths.

You were born into this world. Unfortunately, because of sin, you were not born naturally good, and you were not born neutral. Scripture says that before we trust in Christ for our salvation, we are naturally enemies of God, unable to please Him in our own abilities. It is a sad reality, but it does not end there.

Scripture claims that when you trust in Christ and repent of your sin by His grace that you are starting a new journey that we call salvation. The Lord Himself changes your heart to love Him, and day by day through His grace, the word of God, and interactions with other believers, your mind is being renewed in the knowledge of Him, your will is conformed to match His will, your emotions are not to control you anymore, but be used to glorify God, and your behaviors are changed to be worthy of the name of Christ. This is not an instant change, but a process called sanctification. On top of all of that, God knows that you cannot do these things apart from Him, so He puts His Spirit inside of you, and you become His temple! The Spirit of God also seals you for the day of redemption, acting as a sort of down payment of God on your life. He now owns you. You can read about it in Ephesians 1:13–14 and 1 Corinthians 6:19–20. This means that you are indwelt by God Himself. That is a secure feeling.

- ? So, the Spirit of God is in us. Let's keep going. Someone read Colossians 3:1–3. What truth is presented here? *Not only is Christ, the Holy Spirit, in us, but we are in Christ.*
- ? Catch that?! Our lives are hidden in Christ. But keep going, according to Colossians 3, our lives are hidden with Christ in whom? *In God.*

Follow with me. When the Lord saves you, He puts His Spirit inside you. So the Spirit of God is in you, and you are in Christ, living a life hidden with Him in God. What amazing security we have as believers!

So what does this mean for us? Consider one example of fear. There are many people who struggle with fear—fear of other people's opinions, fear of failure, fear of God hating them, etc. When you see this kind of security in the Lord, what does that do to your fears? You realize that nothing can happen to you apart from God's permission, and we know that He does not allow evil things to happen in order to make your life miserable. He always acts for His own glory, and you can be confident that even when bad things happen, He intends for it to be used for good in your life (Romans 8:28). This good may not look exactly like the good you have sketched out in your head, though. The good may be that you realize how independent you are, and you turn to the Lord more in dependence and humility. The good may be that you realize you trust more in money than in God. The good may be that you realize that you value security in a house, car, or person more than you value security in Christ. The good may be that God shows you your pride and calls you to turn from that.

You can probably think of many more examples, but the point is that when God reveals these things to us, it often hurts, because it challenges the ways we are living and calls us to repent and turn to Christ. However, understanding this can help combat our fears in life. Fear will be a major topic as we move through these lessons, so do not consider this as all there is to say about the topic, but as a primer on how to deal with and understand fear.



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.
- Pray that through understanding who the Lord is, our fears would be destroyed and we would understand and love the security we have in Him.

