

U N I T O N E

Exploring God's Book

Lesson 1

The Investigation Begins



BUILDING ON THIS WEEK'S BIBLE TRUTH:

This quarter's lessons take young teens on a journey that leads to a deeper understanding of God's Word. The first step is salvation. The next is spending time with God. The joy of personal discovery eclipses every other excitement. After it happens, the Bible may never seem boring or confusing again.

Overview

Scripture

Psalm 119; James 1

Bible Truth

Personal Bible study will reveal to us the wonder of who God is, what God does, and how we can please Him.

Life Response Aim

To devote 10 minutes each day this next week to the study of James 1.

Memory Verse

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." *Psalm 119:18, KJV*

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."

Psalm 119:18, NIV

FOCUS

The Thrill of Discovery

DISCOVER

The Book of Life

RESPOND

Principles to Practice

Materials

- ☐ Bibles, paper, pencils
- ☐ Chalkboard, chalk

Focus

- ☐ Watch with a second hand (or timer)
- ☐ Fast-food gift certificates, tape

Discover

- ☐ 3"x 5" cards
- ☐ *Young Teen Scene*, Student Sheet 1
- ☐ Sheet 1, *Teaching Resources*
- ☐ Study Bible, commentary on James, or Bible dictionary


Respond

- ☐ *Young Teen Scene*, ON TARGET 1 (page 31)
- ☐ *Real Time* take-home papers

Preparing Your Heart to Teach

THE THRILL OF DISCOVERY (PS. 119 AND JAMES 1): Imagine finding a rare treasure. The excitement. The feeling of discovering something of rare value. Is that how you feel when you pick up your Bible each week? As you prepare this week's lesson, let Psalm 119 and James 1 fill your heart with that renewed excitement. Where's the treasure? You hold it in your hand. Make Psalm 119:18 your prayer as you study God's Word for yourself and to share with your young teens.

The Thrill of Discovery


 Before class, hide several inexpensive fast-food gift certificates around the room. Tape them under chairs, behind pictures, inside books, in a desk drawer, etc.

Begin your lesson by explaining that you have hidden these gift certificates at various places around the room. Allow your students one minute to find and keep as many gift certificates as they can. Have them shout, “I’ve got one!” to the others in the class, every time they find one. Use this activity to generate as much excitement as you can.

When the minute is up, comment on this simple activity.

You are one exciting group of people! We are going to have a lot of fun together this quarter.

Did you notice how much enthusiasm you all showed when you were looking for these gift certificates? There is something exciting about discovering things of value, isn’t there? There is the feeling of accomplishment, of achieving something that is important or significant. There is the benefit that comes from making these discoveries—in this case, the benefit of getting a discount on some fast food. There is the sense that your efforts are being rewarded. Discovery is a thrilling thing!

 **We are about to learn that the Bible is a book full of things to discover—valuable things and information. You think a \$100 gift certificate is valuable? Inside the covers of your Bible are pages of the most valuable information you will ever find—information about how you and I ought**

to live, the kinds of choices we ought to make, how our past is forgiven, how much God loves us in the present, and how glorious our future will be. The Bible is a gift that we ought to treasure, a book we ought to study. There is no greater privilege in all the world than to read and study this love letter from God to us.

One of the best reasons to study the Bible is that God gave us His Word because He loves us. He longs to have us know Him better. When we study the Bible, our relationship with God grows and deepens. He tells us things that we would never learn any other way. During the next three months, we’re going to see how important and exciting the study of our Bibles can really be.

ENRICHMENT IDEAS

JAMES PREVIEW

For Discover, invite an adult helper to visit your class and play the part of James. Have him explain why he wrote his book, to whom he wrote it, and what it’s about. Have him share his heart concerning his compassion for those who suffered for their faith in the first century and those who are suffering today because of their faith.


CLOSING DISCUSSION

For Respond, have your class break into pairs and discuss the following questions.


1. Why do you (or don’t you) take time to study the Bible on your own?
2. What do you like the most/least about the Bible?
3. What do you think the main purpose of Bible study is?
4. What other activities/interests compete with the Bible for your time?
5. Complete these three statements.
 - a. I would study the Bible more if . . .
 - b. The main thing I would like to learn about God from reading and studying the Bible is . . .
 - c. I will/will not study the Bible this week because . . .

Have each pair end their discussion with prayer. Ask them to pray for a deep desire to know God more intimately through their study of His Word.

The Book of Life

 Psalm 119:18 is foundational not only to this lesson, but to this entire unit. Before class, write the words of this verse on several different 3" x 5" cards. At the beginning of class, have your students read the verse aloud from the Bible. Then pass out the cards and have the students line up in order so they can recite the verse correctly. Then, call out a key word, and have the student with that word become the focal point of the line. That student keeps his card. Collect and redistribute the remaining cards; have the students line up in order again on either side of the focal point person in the correct order of the verse. Repeat this procedure until the students can quote this entire verse from memory.

A DESCRIPTION OF SCRIPTURE (Ps. 119)

 **When David wrote Psalm 119, he gave us many descriptions of the Bible, what the Bible meant to him, and what it can do for us. For the next few minutes, let's see how many of these descriptions we can discover.**

Distribute paper and pencils. Have your students work individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Assign one or more sections of the psalm to each of the individuals, pairs, or groups. Have them write down every description of the Bible they can find in their section.

When they are done, reassemble and have each share with the others what they have found. As they do, list their findings on the chalkboard, where you have already written "The Bible..." Among other things, your students might discover that the Bible...

- is righteous (v. 7).
- teaches us how and why to be pure (v. 9).
- keeps us from sin (v. 11).
- causes us to rejoice (v. 14).
- counsels us (v. 24).
- strengthens us (v. 28).
- is good (v. 39).
- is true (v. 43).
- refreshes and renews our lives (v. 50).
- gives us good judgment (v. 66).
- is more precious than gold/silver (v. 72).
- can be trusted (v. 86).
- will last forever (v. 89).
- makes us wise (v. 98).
- is sweeter than honey (v. 103).
- lights our paths (v. 105).

- brings us joy (v. 111).
- gives us understanding (v. 144).
- gives us peace (v. 165).


This list is pretty amazing. If we believe all of this, we'll be driven to read our Bibles every day. But for some strange reason, many of us do not. Why is this so?

Give your students time to respond.

My guess is this: It's hard work to study the Bible. It takes discipline to pick it up and read it each day. It takes commitment to think about what it says and how it applies to our lives.

I want to help you love the Bible the way I do. Believe me, Bible study is worth the effort. For the next several weeks, we will discover many different ways to study the Bible. By taking a couple of simple steps, you will be able to experience the thrill of discovery for yourself! Trust me. Six weeks from now, your own personal Bible study will never be the same again.

THE STUDY OF A LIFETIME

 Give your students a very basic overview of the Bible by writing the words O-L-D T-E-S-T-A-M-E-N-T and N-E-W T-E-S-T-A-M-E-N-T on the chalkboard. Under OLD TESTAMENT, number the letters 1-2-3 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9; do the same under NEW TESTAMENT.

The Bible is much more than a very special book. It is actually a library or collection of many books, divided into two parts—the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is made up of 39 books (circle the numbers 3 and 9 under the words Old Testament). The New Testament consists of 3 x 9 or 27 books (circle the numbers 3 and 9 under the words New Testament). This makes a total of 66 books.

When we first pick up a Bible, it might seem a bit overwhelming. Where should we start? How do we make sense out of it?

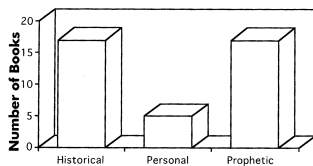
First, we need to understand that the Old Testament describes how God related to the human race through His chosen people. They were known as the Israelites because they were descendants of Israel (Jacob) and lived in the land of Israel. The New Testament describes how God relates to the human race through His Son, Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, God

prepared the world for the coming of His Son; the New Testament reveals that He came. In the Old Testament people looked forward to Jesus' coming, and in the New Testament, people look back to His coming.

Draw a diagram of the following graph on the chalkboard as you discuss it briefly with your students.

OLD TESTAMENT OVERVIEW

Both the Old and New Testaments can be divided into three sections. They are historical, personal, and prophetic.



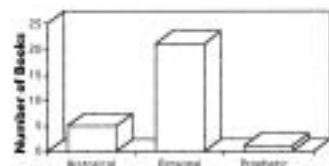
The Old Testament has 17 historical books, 5 personal books, and 17 prophetic books. The historical books tell the story of the Old Testament. That is, if you want to know the story of God's people as it unfolded from Creation, you can read the first 17 books of the Old Testament (Genesis to Esther).

The personal books reveal the thoughts and feelings of those who participated in the story. If you were to read Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, you would see that they are loaded with human emotions.

The prophetic books record the preaching that took place while the story was unfolding.

NEW TESTAMENT OVERVIEW

The New Testament has the same three categories.



The historical books include the four Gospels and the Book of Acts, the record of the birth and growth of the church. The personal books are letters written by Paul and others to churches and individuals, explaining how to live the Christian life. The one prophetic book, Revelation, details the exciting events that will take place at the end of the age.

In this unit you will learn how to discover for yourself some of the thrilling things found in the Bible. We will apply the Bible study methods that we learn to the Book of James. It is a personal letter written by James to a group of struggling believers.

BOOK OF JAMES OVERVIEW

Give each student a copy of Student Sheet 1, *Young Teen Scene*. The student sheets for this unit form a continuous mystery story. It's a fun, creative way for your students to put into action the things they learn about how to study the Bible for themselves.

Let your students read the first part of this story (1a) and then answer the three questions on side 1b. When students have finished, have them report their answers to the class. Use the following commentary to supplement their discussion.

The two pieces of evidence on Student Sheet 1b are a contents page for the Book of James and a paraphrase of the first verse in the book.

A good youth study Bible will explain information your students will need to understand the background of any Bible book. They will learn, for example, that the 12 tribes of Israel were displaced, scattered from their homeland by persecution. These believers lost their homes and jobs and were separated from their loved ones and friends. They were a hurting bunch and desperately needed the instruction and encouragement that James provided. The book is about Christian living in difficult circumstances.

Display Sheet 1, *Teaching Resources*, entitled "Background Info." Have students use the Bible study resources to determine the facts called for. Fill in the sheet as your students discover the missing information.

1. Author: James was the half-brother of Jesus and a respected church leader (Acts 15). Paul considered James a pillar of the church (Gal. 2:9). James died for his faith around A.D. 62.

2. Date: James was one of the first New Testament books to be written, probably around A.D. 45–50.

3. Audience: The 12 tribes to whom James wrote were Jewish believers who fled from their homeland because of religious persecution.


4. Purpose: James wrote this personal letter to instruct and encourage God's people during their difficult circumstances.

5. Theme: The Book of James emphasizes faith put into action and has strong similarities to the Sermon on the Mount.




Sheet 1,
Teaching Resources


Principles to Practice

 You might be wondering to yourself, *Since this book was written so very long ago to a troubled people facing unique, life-threatening circumstances, what could it possibly say to me?*


Great question. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us that all Scripture, including James, is inspired by God and profitable for us to read. Even though we are not facing the same circumstances that James's readers were, God has preserved it for our benefit. There is much in James for us to learn today. To do so we must discover the definition of one most important word. The Bible, unlike any other book ever written, is filled with principles for us to discover and apply to our daily lives. A principle is a "statement of truth that is always true no matter when it is stated." For example, if I say to you "James's readers were suffering terribly," that is a historical fact, but it is not a principle since his original readers are dead and no longer suffering. But if I say, "When you and I suffer, we can rejoice because God is in control of all our circumstances," I have just stated a very practical principle. The goal of our Bible study is to discover principles, those statements of Biblical truth that are as true today as the day they were written.


 Take one of your notebooks and convert it into a Bible study notebook for the next few weeks as we learn how to study the Bible. For this next week, I want you to study James 1:1-8 and write down as many principles as you can from this short passage. I am not so concerned with how many principles you discover as I am about how practical they are to your life. Do your best. You won't be graded, and you won't hand it in. This is for your benefit alone.

When we come back next week, we'll share the principles we discovered. Then I am going to teach you a Bible study method that will help you discover lots of exciting principles every time you study the Bible on your own!

 Thank God together as a class for the Bible and for the privilege we enjoy of studying the Bible for ourselves.

ON THEIR OWN

 Hand out ON TARGET 1, cut from page 31 of *Young Teen Scene*. Have your students use this simple three-step guide as a reminder of what their goal should be every time they study the Bible for themselves.

 "Lies of the New Age," in this week's *Real Time*, will equip your students to recognize the subtle deceptions of today's not-so-modern philosophies. And the POWER LINK daily devotionals will reinforce the truths taught in today's lesson.