

Lesson 1

Why the Bible?



Building on last week's Bible Truth: During the last quarter, your students examined who God is, Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, and the failures of people in the Bible. Today's lesson starts a new unit on the Bible.

Overview

Scripture

Selected Scriptures

Bible Truth

The Bible is God's written revelation of Himself to us.

Life Response Aim

To demonstrate the Bible's importance to our lives today.

Key Verse

"The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret."

Daniel 2:47, KJV

"The king said to Daniel, 'Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.' "

Daniel 2:47, NIV

FOCUS

Nagging Questions

DISCOVER

Real Revelation

RESPOND

God's Word Is Alive

Materials

- ☐ Bible, paper, pencils, chalkboard, chalk

Focus

- ☐ No materials needed

Discover

- ☐ No materials needed

Respond

- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Teach Sheet 1 (page 4 of the *Zelos Repro Pack*), one copy for each student
- ☐ *Zelos Journal for Student Disciples*

Preparing Your Heart to Teach

Read these Scripture passages throughout the week:

Deceitful (Jer. 17:5-18): Many of your students are learning from their culture and schools that, as human beings, we're all basically good. God said no—left to itself, the human heart is beyond cure (v. 9). *Pray that all of your students will understand their need for God.*

Sinners All (Rom. 3:9-20): The law proved that no human is capable of being good enough for God. *Ask God to help your students understand the gift of grace He has given to them through Jesus.*

Me First (James 4:1-12): We're all, by nature, most concerned with ourselves. We want to accomplish our goals, regardless of the cost to others (vv. 1-3). That's why we have to be told to find peace by adopting God's goals for us (v. 7). *Pray that your students will submit themselves to God.*

Nagging Questions



Introduce this unit by sharing the following story with your students:

James felt a sinking sensation in the pit of his stomach. He'd been so sure it was going to be a good school year. Now he didn't think so.

James hated history the most. It was bad enough he had to take a history of civilization course as one of his high school classes. It was even worse that, after being in the class for a week, he already couldn't stand his teacher.

James had trusted in Christ only a month before at summer camp. He'd accepted his youth pastor's challenge to stand up for Christ at school this year, bursting onto campus with enthusiasm and excitement.

"This year," he'd said to himself, "I am going to make a difference." But before the first week was over, he felt like he'd been punched in the stomach. Mr. Thomas, his history teacher, tore into Christianity in every class.

"Where is God in history?" Mr. Thomas asked. "If God exists, then why has human history been full of so much suffering? Where was God when people were being enslaved and tortured and killed? Why is history written in blood? If we're all brothers and sisters, then why haven't we ever been able to get along?"

These were tough questions, and James couldn't even begin to offer an answer. Besides, anything he said would only be shot down and ridiculed by Mr. Thomas. Instead, James just covered in the corner and listened.

The final blow came on Friday. Mr. Thomas paused in his lecture about the development of culture in ancient civilizations, looked around the room, got a stern expression on his face, and angrily declared, "Mankind would have been a lot better off if we had never invented God. Religion is the root cause of every problem plaguing the human race today. No thinking person could possibly believe the Bible."

James felt a knot in his stomach as he looked around the room and saw most of the other students nodding in agreement. He was suddenly paralyzed with fear when Mr. Thomas asked, "Is there anyone who disagrees with me about that?"



Engage your students in a discussion about this story by having them respond to the following

questions:

- Have you ever encountered a teacher like Mr. Thomas? If so, what it was like?
- If James called and asked you for some advice, what would you tell him?
- Were the questions Mr. Thomas asked valid or invalid? Why?
- Can we turn to the Bible for the answers to the questions Mr. Thomas raised, or are we left on our own to grope for the answers?
- Based on the Bible, how would you answer the questions Mr. Thomas asked?

TRANSITION Cheap shots against the Bible are nothing new. Many people today are passionately opposed to God and His truth.

They, like Mr. Thomas, will argue that more harm than good has been done in the name of religion. Failing to distinguish between the genuine (Biblical Christianity) and the phony (the many harmful religious systems in the world), they tragically reject any notion of God or His Word.

Fortunately, we have in our possession a book we can treasure as the one reliable source of truth in the world. We can turn to this book to find the answers to the kinds of questions raised by Mr. Thomas and others. The Bible is a precious book we can count on and live by. We dare not take it for granted.

Do you love and cherish the Bible as God's Word? Or is it just another book resting on one of your shelves, collecting dust? Do you agree with Mr. Thomas when he suggests that no thinking person can believe the Bible? Or do you recognize just how wrong he is?




Real Revelation


This morning, we're going to begin a four-part series on the Bible. Specifically, we're going to learn just how valuable the Bible is to our lives. It's important for us to be able to approach the Bible with confidence.

The kind of attack Mr. Thomas leveled against the Bible is not uncommon. If you haven't yet been exposed to such an attack, you probably will be someday. The only way you'll be able to stand firm is to be clear in your conviction that Jesus was right when He said that God's Word is truth (John 17:17).

In the next four weeks, we're going to discover together the many reasons we can read the Bible with absolute confidence.

Our study will center around four key terms, words you will definitely want to remember. The first is found in Daniel 2:47. Let's open our Bibles and read it together.

 Read Daniel 2:47 together as a class. Point out that there is a word, a form of which is repeated a couple of times in the verse. The verse makes it very clear that God is a *revealer* of truth. That is, God is able to make known to us things we couldn't know any other way.

 The Bible is very clear that God revealed Himself to us. The term *revelation* should be easy for our students to understand. In order to illustrate the concept, engage your students in the following revelation exercise:

Divide your students into groups of two or three. Reveal some fact about your personal life they don't know. Then ask them: **In how many different ways could I have revealed this to you?**

Allow each group two or three minutes to list all possible ways you could have made this revelation to them. Ideas could include: telling them, drawing a picture, writing the information on the chalkboard, e-mailing, faxing, telephoning, announcing it on the radio, performing a skit in which the revelation is made, giving them a videotaped presentation about the revelation, etc. Award inexpensive prizes to the group that comes up with the most creative ideas.


Then make this observation: **You came up with several different ways I could have revealed something to you. God used different means to reveal Himself and His plan, as well. Revelation**

is nothing more than God disclosing to us truth we couldn't know any other way.

HOW GOD HAS SPOKEN

God is a creative Person. He did not limit Himself to just one means of revelation. A careful study of the Scriptures demonstrates that God revealed His truth to different people in different ways.

In the following several examples, we will discover several of the ways God revealed Himself and His plan to people.

 As you discuss with your students each of the following means of revelation, have them quickly search the Scriptures to find one or more Biblical examples.

Lavish praise on your students when they are successful in their search; offer words of encouragement if they are unable to locate an instance in which a specific method of communication was used.

GOD SPOKE THROUGH ANGELS.

Several examples in Scripture tell of instances when God's messengers were used to speak His words to others.

1. Angels reassured Abraham that he would indeed have a son, just as God had promised (Gen. 18:10).
2. Angels warned Lot of the impending doom that would destroy Sodom, urging him to flee for his life (Gen. 19:17).
3. The angel Gabriel revealed significant end time events to Daniel (Dan. 9:21-27).
4. This same angel Gabriel informed Zacharias that he would have a son who would prepare the way for the coming Messiah (Luke 1:11-20).
5. Gabriel also informed Mary that God had blessed her by selecting her to be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:26-37).
6. Angels announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds who were tending their flocks in a field near Bethlehem (Luke 2:8-14).
7. An angel announced to the world that Jesus had risen from the dead (Matt. 28:5-7).
8. An angel directed Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch, resulting in the Ethiopian's salvation and baptism (Acts 8:26).

9. An angel freed Peter from his imprisonment at the hands of Herod (Acts 12:7-10).

GOD SPOKE WITH AN AUDIBLE VOICE.

1. God spoke to Adam (Gen. 3:9-19).
2. God spoke to Noah (Gen. 6:13-21).
3. God spoke to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3).
4. God spoke to Moses (Ex. 20:1-17).
5. God spoke to Joshua (Josh. 1:1-9).
6. God spoke to Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1-14).
7. God spoke to Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. 7:4-16).
8. God spoke to Elijah (1 Kings 17:2-4).
9. God spoke to Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-5).

GOD SPOKE THROUGH A STILL, SMALL VOICE (1 Kings 19:11-12).

GOD REVEALED HIMSELF IN NATURE (Ps. 19:1-3; Acts 14:15-17; Rom. 1:18-20).

GOD REVEALED TRUTH THROUGH THE LIPS OF A DONKEY! (Num. 22:28)

GOD SPOKE THROUGH PEOPLE'S DREAMS.

1. Jacob received assurances that God would faithfully fulfill the covenant He'd made with Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 28:12-15).
2. Solomon received both wisdom and warnings in a dream (1 Kings 3:5-14; 9:2-9).
3. Joseph, the husband of Mary, was assured of Mary's purity in a dream (Matt. 1:20); was warned to flee to Egypt in a dream (Matt. 2:13); and was directed back to his homeland in a dream (Matt. 2:19-22).

GOD SPOKE THROUGH VISIONS.

Note: Visions differ from dreams in that the person receiving a vision was always alert and awake.

1. Jacob was instructed to go to Egypt in a vision (Gen. 46:2-4).
2. David was warned of judgment in a vision (1 Chron. 21:9-12, 16).
3. Isaiah viewed God's holiness in a vision (Isa. 6:1-8).
4. Daniel saw an incredible revelation of the future in a vision (Dan. 7; 8).
5. Ezekiel witnessed the regathering of Israel in a vision (Ezek. 37).

6. Ananias was called by God to minister to Paul in a vision (Acts 9:10-12).

7. Cornelius was instructed to send for Paul in a vision (Acts 10:3-6).

8. Peter was given a powerful object lesson in a vision (Acts 10:10-16).

9. Paul was called, comforted, and transported to heaven through visions (Acts 16:9; 23:11; 2 Cor. 12:1-4).

10. John received the Book of Revelation in a vision (Rev. 1:1).

GOD REVEALED HIMSELF THROUGH "THE ANGEL OF THE LORD," A PRE-BIRTH APPEARANCE OF CHRIST.

1. The Angel of the Lord wrestled with Jacob (Gen. 32:24-30).

2. The Angel of the Lord spoke to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2).

3. The Angel of the Lord reassured Joshua (Josh. 5:13-15).

4. The Angel of the Lord commissioned Gideon (Jud. 6:11).

5. The Angel of the Lord spoke to Elijah (1 Kings 19:7).

GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH HIS WORD.

Please emphasize to your students that each of the examples offered above happened during unique, unprecedented times in human history. None of the above mentioned instances are the normal, natural way God communicates to His people today. Further, none of the people mentioned above had the benefit of the completed Scriptures. God went to extraordinary means to communicate an extraordinary message during extraordinary times.

The Bible is very clear that today God speaks to His people through His Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It's His chosen means of revelation to us today.

TRANSITION 'Despite the criticisms of Mr. Thomas, God is real and He has spoken to us in His Word. We can trust and treasure the Bible. The remaining lessons in this unit will help us to appreciate it even more.

God's Word Is Alive

Mr. Thomas's challenge could really shake some people's faith. It's possible he shook James's faith. As a new believer, James didn't know how to answer his history teacher.

Let's imagine for a moment that James calls you on the phone and asks you the questions he was asked by Mr. Thomas. Using the following verses, offer him the encouragement he so desperately needs.

Distribute copies of Teach Sheet 1 (page 4 of the *Zelos Repro Pack*), a worksheet to help students prepare their responses to James's call for help.

Have students conduct a mock phone conversation with James, explaining the Biblical answers to his questions:

- Jeremiah 17:9: The heart of mankind is

desperately wicked.

- Isaiah 59:2: Sinful man is separated from God.
- Romans 3:10-18: The sinfulness of man affects every aspect of his life.
- James 4:1-3: The sinfulness of man causes him to do horrible things to others.
- Romans 2:4: God is patient, and His goodness is intended to bring sinful people to repentance.
- Romans 1:18: God's wrath will fall. He may be silent, but He will not remain silent.

Thank God together that you hold in your hands God's revelation of Himself to us. Ask Him to help each of you to love and cherish it more and more each day.

Zelos Power Zone



In this week's "Z-Studies" in the *Zelos Journal for Student Disciples*, your students read and wrote about Jeremiah 17:5-10; Romans 3:9-20; and James 4:1-12. The topic was why we, as fallen humans, need God's Word in the first place.

Ask, "How do humans do in life on their own, without listening to and relying on the Bible?"

PHONE CALL PREPARATION SHEET	
Jeremiah 17:9	James 4:1-12
Romans 3:10-18	Romans 2:4
Romans 1:18	Romans 1:18
Conclusions:	

Teach Sheet 1
Zelos Repro Pack

ENRICHMENT IDEAS

BOOK TABLE (FOR RESPOND)

Learning about the Bible is fascinating. Because we can't cover everything in four lessons, encourage your students to do outside reading on their own. Contact a Christian bookstore or library in your area and have a representative come and suggest several books that will aid your students in their understanding of the Bible. Or gather some books from your own church library and make them available to your students.

GRAFFITI WALL (FOR RESPOND)

Hang a large piece of butcher paper on a wall in your classroom. Each week, at the conclusion of the lesson, have your students summarize the lesson with one clear, forceful statement about the Bible. Then ask someone to write it on the "Graffiti Wall" as a reminder about what they're learning.

Encourage your students to use the "Z-Studies" in their copies of the *Zelos Journal for Student Disciples*.